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By Victor Hugo.
COSETTE & MARIUS.



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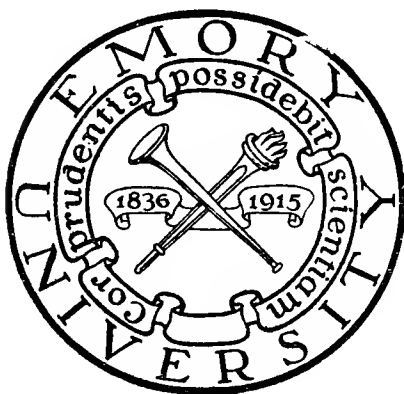
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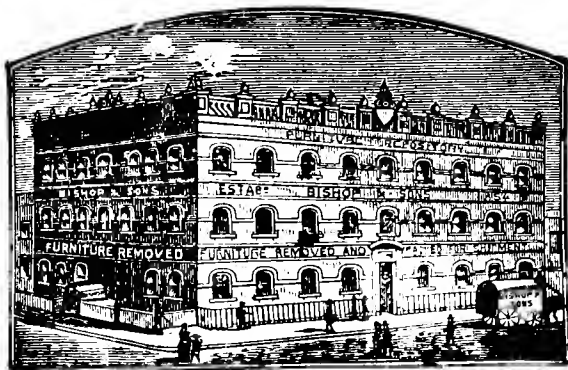
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LES MISÉRABLES.

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BY
VICTOR HUGO.

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Les Misérables

C O S E T T E



Les Misérables

C O S E T T E

Book First

THE SHIP ORION.

I.

JEAN VALJEAN had been retaken.

We shall be pardoned for passing rapidly over the painful details. We shall merely reproduce a couple of items published in the newspapers of that day, some few months after the remarkable events that occurred at M—— sur M——.

The articles referred to are somewhat laconic. It will be remembered that the *Gazette des Tribunaux* had not yet been established.

We copy the first from the *Drapeau Blanc*. It is dated the 25th of July, 1823 :—

"A district of the **Pas-de-Calais** has just been the scene of an extraordinary occurrence. A stranger in that department, known as **Monsieur Madeleine**, had, within a few years past, restored, by means of certain new processes, the manufacture of jet and black glass ware—a former local branch of industry. He had made his own fortune by it, and, in fact, that of the entire district. In acknowledgment of his services he had been appointed Mayor. The police has discovered that **Monsieur Madeleine** was none other than an escaped convict, condemned in 1796 for robbery, and named **Jean Valjean**. This **Jean Valjean** has been sent back to the galleys. It appears that previous to his arrest, he succeeded in withdrawing from **Laffitte's** a sum amounting to more than half a million which he had deposited there, and which it is said, by the way, he had very legitimately realized in his business. Since his return to the galleys at **Toulon**, it has been impossible to discover where **Jean Valjean** concealed this money."

The second article, which enters a little more into detail, is taken from the *Journal de Paris* of the same date :—

"An old convict, named **Jean Valjean**, has recently been brought before **Var Assizes**, under circumstances calculated to attract attention. This villain had succeeded in eluding the vigilance of the police ; he had changed his name, and had even been adroit enough to procure the appointment of Mayor in one of our small towns in the North. He had established in this town a very considerable business, but was, at length, unmasked and arrested, thanks to the indefatigable zeal of the public authorities. He kept, as his mistress, a prostitute, who died of the shock at the moment of his arrest. This wretch, who is endowed with herculean strength, managed to escape, but, three or four days afterwards, the police retook him, in **Paris**, just as he was getting into one of the small vehicles that ply between the capital and the village of **Montfermeil** (**Seine-et-Oise**). It is said

that he had availed himself of the interval of these three or four days of freedom, to withdraw a considerable sum deposited by him with one of our principal bankers. The amount is estimated at six or seven hundred thousand francs. According to the minutes of the case, he has concealed it in some place known to himself alone, and it has been impossible to seize it; however that may be, the said Jean Valjean has been brought before the assizes of the Department of the Var under indictment for an assault and robbery on the high road. This robber attempted no defence. It was proven by the able and eloquent representative of the crown that the robbery was shared in by others, and that Jean Valjean formed one of a band of robbers in the South. Consequently, Jean Valjean, being found guilty, was condemned to death. The criminal refused to appeal to the higher courts, and the king, in his inexhaustible clemency, deigned to commute his sentence to that of hard labour in prison for life. Jean Valjean was immediately forwarded to the galleys at Toulon."

It will not be forgotten that Jean Valjean had at M—— sur M—— certain religious habits. Some of the newspapers and, among them, the *Constitutionnel*, held up this commutation as a triumph of the clerical party.

Jean Valjean changed his number at the galleys. He became 9430.

While we are about it, let us remark, in dismissing the subject, that with M. Madeleine, the prosperity of M—— sur M—— disappeared; all that he had foreseen, in that night of fever and irresolution, was realized; he gone, the *soul* was gone. After his downfall, there was at M—— sur M—— that egotistic distribution of what is left when great men have fallen—that fatal carving up of prosperous enterprises which is daily going on, out of sight, in human society. Jealous rivalries arose. The spacious workshops of M. Madeleine were closed; the buildings fell into ruin,

the workmen dispersed. Some left the country, others abandoned the business. From that time forth, everything was done on a small, instead of on the large scale, and for gain rather than for good. No longer any centre ; competition on all sides, and on all sides venom. M. Madeleine had ruled and directed everything. He fallen, every man strove for himself ; the spirit of strife succeeded to the spirit of organization, bitterness to cordiality, hatred of each against each instead of the good will of the founder towards all ; the threads knitted by M. Madeleine became entangled and were broken ; the workmanship was debased, the manufacturers were degraded, confidence was killed ; customers diminished, there were fewer orders, wages decreased, the shops became idle, bankruptcy followed. And, then there was nothing left for the poor. All that was there disappeared.

Even the State noticed that some one had been crushed, in some direction. Less than four years after the decree of the court of assizes establishing the identity of M. Madeleine and Jean Valjean, for the benefit of the galleys, the expense of collecting the taxes was doubled in the district of M—— sur M—— ; and M. de Villèle remarked the fact, on the floor of the Assembly, in the month of February, 1827.

II.

BEFORE proceeding further, it will not be amiss to relate, in some detail, a singular incident which took place, about the same time, at Montfermeil, and which, perhaps, does not fall in badly with certain conjectures of the public authorities.

There exists, in the neighbourhood of Montfermeil, a

very ancient superstition, all the more rare and precious from the fact that a popular superstition in the vicinity of Paris is like an aloe tree in Siberia. Now, we are of those who respect anything in the way of a rarity. Here, then, is the superstition of Montfermeil: they believe, there, that the Evil One has, from time immemorial, chosen the forest as the hiding-place for his treasure. The good wives of the vicinity affirm that it is no unusual thing to meet, at sundown, in the secluded portions of the woods, a black looking man, resembling a waggoner or woodcutter, shod in wooden shoes, clad in breeches and sack of coarse linen, and recognizable from the circumstance that, instead of a cap or hat, he has two immense horns upon his head. That certainly ought to render him recognizable. This man is constantly occupied in digging holes. There are three ways of dealing when you meet him.

The first mode is to approach the man and speak to him. Then you perceive the man is nothing but a peasant, that he looks black because it is twilight, that he is digging no hole whatever, but is merely cutting grass for his cows; and that what had been taken for horns are nothing but his pitchfork which he carries on his back, and the prongs of which, thanks to the night perspective, seemed to rise from his head. You go home and die within the week. The second method is to watch him, to wait until he has dug the hole, closed it up, and gone away; then, to run quickly to the spot, to open it and get the "treasure" which the black-looking man has, of course, buried there. In this case, you die within the month. The third manner is not to speak to the dark man nor even to look at him, and to run away as fast as you can. You die within the year.

As all three of these methods have their drawbacks, the second, which, at least, offers some advantages, among others that of possessing a treasure, though it be

but for a month, is the one generally adopted. Daring fellows, who never neglect a good chance, have, therefore, many times, it is asseverated, reopened the holes thus dug by the black-looking man, and tried to rob the Devil. It would appear, however, that it is not a very good business—at least, if we are to believe tradition, and, more especially, two enigmatic lines in barbarous Latin left us, on this subject, by a roguish Norman monk, named Tryphon, who dabbled in the black art. This Tryphon was buried in the abbey of St. Georges de Bocherville, near Rouen, and toads are produced from his grave.

Well then, the treasure-seeker makes tremendous efforts, for the holes referred to are dug, generally, very deep; he sweats, he digs, he works away all night, for this is done in the night-time; he gets his clothes wet, he consumes his candle, he hacks and breaks his pickaxe, and when, at length, he has reached the bottom of the hole, when he has put his hand upon the “treasure,” what does he find? What is this treasure of the Evil One? A penny—sometimes a crown; a stone, a skeleton, a bleeding corpse, sometimes a spectre twice folded like a sheet of paper in a portfolio, sometimes nothing.

Now, very shortly after the time when the authorities took it into their heads that the liberated convict Jean Valjean had, during his escape of a few days’ duration, been prowling about Montfermeil, it was remarked, in that village, that a certain old road-labourer named Boulatruelle had “a fancy” for the woods. People in the neighbourhood claimed to know that Boulatruelle had been in the galleys; he was under police surveillance, and, as he could find no work anywhere, the Government employed him at half wages as a mender on the cross-road from Gagny to Lagny.

This Boulatruelle was a man in bad odour with the people of the neighbourhood; he was too respectful, too

humble, prompt to doff his cap to everybody ; he always trembled and smiled in the presence of the gendarmes, was probably in secret connection with robber-bands, said me gossips, and suspected of lying in wait in the hedge corners, at nightfall. He had nothing in his favour except that he was a drunkard.

What had been observed was this :—

For some time past, Boulatruelle had left off his work at stone-breaking and keeping the road in order, very early, and had gone into the woods with his pick. He would be met towards evening in the remotest glades and the wildest thickets, having the appearance of a person looking for something and, sometimes, digging holes. The good wives who passed that way took him at first for Beelzebub, then they recognized Boulatruelle, and were by no means reassured. These chance meetings seemed greatly to disconcert Boulatruelle. It was clear that he was trying to conceal himself, and that there was something mysterious in his operations.

The village gossips said :—" It's plain that the Devil has been about, Boulatruelle has seen him and is looking for his treasure. The truth is, he is just the fellow to rob the Evil One." The Voltairians added : " Will Boulatruelle catch the Devil or the Devil catch Boulatruelle ?" The old women crossed themselves very often.

However, the visits of Boulatruelle to the woods ceased and he recommenced his regular labour on the road. People began to talk about something else.

A few, however, retained their curiosity, thinking that there might be involved in the affair, not the fabulous treasures of the legend, but some goodly matter more substantial than the Devil's bank-bills, and that Boulatruelle had half spied out the secret. The worst puzzled of all were the schoolmaster and the tavern-keeper, Thénardier, who was everybody's friend, and who had

not disdained to strike up an intimacy with even Boulatruelle.

"He has been in the galleys," said Thénardier. "Good Lord! nobody knows who is there or who may be there!"

One evening, the schoolmaster remarked that, in old times, the authorities would have inquired into what Boulatruelle was about in the wood, and that he would have been compelled to speak—even put to torture, if needs were—and that Boulatruelle would not have held out, had he been put to the question by water, for example.

"Let us put him to the wine question," said Thénardier.

So they made up a party and plied the old roadsman with drink. Boulatruelle drank enormously, but said little. He combined with admirable art and in masterly proportions the thirst of a guzzler with the discretion of a judge. However, by dint of returning to the charge, and by putting together and twisting the obscure expressions that he did let fall, Thénardier and the schoolmaster made out, as they thought, the following:—

One morning about daybreak as he was going to his work, Boulatruelle had been surprised at seeing under a bush in a corner of the wood, a pickaxe and spade, *as one would say, hidden there*. However, he supposed that they were the pick and spade of old Six-Fours, the water-carrier, and thought no more about it. But, on the evening of the same day, he had seen, without being seen himself, for he was hidden behind a large tree, "a person who did not belong at all to that region, and whom he, Boulatruelle, knew very well"—or, as Thénardier translated it, "*an old comrade at the galleys*"—turn off from the high road towards the thickest part of the wood. Boulatruelle obstinately refused to tell the stranger's name.

This person carried a package, something square, like a large box or a small trunk. Boulatruelle was surprised. Seven or eight minutes, however, elapsed before it occurred to him to follow the "person." But he was too late. The person was already in the thick woods, night had come on, and Boulatruelle did not succeed in overtaking him. Thereupon he made up his mind to watch the outskirts of the wood. "There was a moon." Two or three hours later Boulatruelle saw this person come forth again from the wood, this time carrying now not the little trunk but a pick and a spade. Boulatruelle let the person pass unmolested, because, as he thought to himself, the other was three times as strong as he, was armed with a pick-axe, and would probably murder him on recognizing his countenance and seeing that he, in turn, was recognized. Touching display of feeling in two old companions unexpectedly meeting ! But the pick and the spade were a ray of light to Boulatruelle ; he hastened to the bushes, in the morning, and found neither one nor the other. He thence concluded that this person, on entering the wood, had dug a hole with his pick, had buried the chest, and had, then, filled up the hole with his spade. Now, as the chest was too small to contain a corpse, it must contain money ; hence his continued searches. Boulatruelle had explored, and sounded, and ransacked the whole forest, had rummaged every spot where the earth seemed to have been freshly disturbed. But all in vain.

He had turned up nothing. Nobody thought any more about it at Montfermeil, excepting a few good gossips, who said : "Be sure the road-labourer of Gagny didn't make all that fuss for nothing : the Devil was certainly here."

III.

TOWARDS the end of October, in that same year, 1823, the inhabitants of Toulon saw coming back into their port, in consequence of heavy weather, and in order to repair some damages, the ship *Orion*, which was at a later period employed at Brest as a vessel of instruction, and which then formed a part of the Mediterranean squadron. This ship, crippled as she was, for the sea had used her roughly, produced some sensation on entering the roadstead. She flew I forget what pennant, but it entitled her to a regular salute of eleven guns, which she returned shot for shot: in all twenty-two.

Every day, from morning till night, the quays, the wharves, and the piers of the port of Toulon were covered with a throng of saunterers and idlers, whose occupation consisted in gazing at the *Orion*.

The *Orion* was a ship that had long been in bad condition. During her previous voyages, thick layers of shell-fish had gathered on her bottom to such an extent as to seriously impede her progress; she had been put on the dry-dock the year before, to be scraped, and then she had gone to sea again. But this scraping had injured her fastening.

In the latitude of the Balearic Isles, her planking had loosened and opened, and as there was in those days no copper sheathing, the ship had leaked. A fierce equinoctial came on, which had stove in the larboard bows and a porthole, and damaged the fore-chain-wales. In consequence of these injuries, the *Orion* had put back to Toulon.

She was moored near the Arsenal. She was in commission, and they were repairing her. The hull had not

been injured on the starboard side, but a few planks had been taken off here and there, according to custom, to admit the air to the framework.

One morning the throng which was gazing at her witnessed an accident.

The crew were engaged in furling sail. The topman, whose duty it was to take in the starboard upper corner of the main top-sail, lost his balance. He was seen tottering; the dense throng assembled on the wharf of the Arsenal uttered a cry, the man's head overbalanced his body, and he whirled over the yard, his arms outstretched towards the deep; as he went over he grasped the man-ropes, first with one hand and then with the other, and hung suspended in that manner. The sea lay far below him at a giddy depth. The shock of his fall had given to the man-ropes a violent swinging motion, and the poor fellow hung dangling to and fro at the end of this line, like a stone in a sling.

To go to his aid was to run a frightful risk. None of the crew, who were all fishermen of the coast, recently taken into service, dared attempt it. In the meantime, the poor topman was becoming exhausted; his agony could not be seen in his countenance, but his increasing weakness could be detected in the movements of all his limbs. His arms twisted about in horrible contortions. Every attempt he made to reascend only increased the oscillations of the man-ropes. He did not cry out, for fear of losing his strength. All were now looking forward to the moment when he should let go of the rope, and, at instants, all turned their heads away that they might not see him fall. There are moments when a rope's end, a pole, the branch of a tree, is life itself, and it is a frightful thing to see a living being lose his hold upon it, and fall like a ripe fruit.

Suddenly a man was discovered clambering up the

rigging with the agility of a wild-cat. This man was clad in red—it was a convict; he wore a green cap—it was a convict for life. As he reached the round-top, a gust of wind blew off his cap, and revealed a head entirely white—it was not a young man.

In fact, one of the convicts employed on board in some prison task, had, at the first alarm, run to the officer of the watch, and, amid the confusion and hesitation of the crew, while all the sailors trembled and shrank back, had asked permission to save the topman's life at the risk of his own. A sign of assent being given, with one blow of a hammer he broke the chain rivetted to the iron ring at his ankle, then took a rope in his hand, and flung himself into the shrouds. Nobody at the moment noticed with what ease the chain was broken. It was only some time afterwards that anybody remembered it.

In a twinkling he was upon the yard. He paused a few seconds, and seemed to measure it with his glance. Those seconds during which the wind swayed the sailor to and fro at the end of the rope seemed ages to the lookers-on. At length the convict raised his eyes to heaven, and took a step forward. The crowd drew a long breath. He was seen to run along the yard. On reaching its extreme tip, he fastened one end of the rope he had with him, and let the other hang at full length. Thereupon, he began to let himself down by his hands along this rope, and then there was an inexpressible sensation of terror; instead of one man, two were seen dangling at that giddy height.

You would have said it was a spider seizing a fly; only in this case the spider was bringing life, and not death. Ten thousand eyes were fixed upon the group. Not a cry; not a word was uttered; the same emotion contracted every brow. Every man held his breath, as if afraid to add the least whisper to the wind which was swaying the two **unfortunate** men.

However, the convict had at length managed to **make** his way down to the seaman. It was time; one minute more, and the man, exhausted and despairing, would have fallen into the deep. The convict firmly secured him to the rope, to which he clung with one hand while he worked with the other. Finally, he was seen reascending to the yard and hauling the sailor after him; he supported him there for an instant to let him recover his strength, and then, lifting him in his arms, carried him, as he walked along the yard, to the crosstrees, and from there to the round-top, where he left him in the hands of his messmates.

Then the throng applauded; old galley sergeants wept, women hugged each other on the wharves, and, on all sides, voices were heard exclaiming, with a sort of tenderly subdued enthusiasm, "This man must be pardoned!"

He, however, had made it a point of duty to descend again immediately, and go back to his work. In order to arrive more quickly, he slid down the rigging, and started to run along a lower yard. All eyes were following him. There was a certain moment when every one felt alarmed; whether it was that he felt fatigued, or because his head swam, people thought they saw him hesitate and stagger. Suddenly the throng uttered a thrilling outcry: the convict had fallen into the sea.

The fall was perilous. The frigate *Algesiras* was moored close to the *Orion*, and the poor convict had plunged between the two ships. It was feared that he would be drawn under one or the other. Four men sprang at once into a boat. The people cheered them on, and anxiety again took possession of all minds. The man had not again risen to the surface. He had disappeared in the sea without making even a ripple, as though he had fallen into a cask of oil. They sounded and dragged the place. It was in vain. The search was continued until night, but not even the body was **found**.

The next morning, the *Toulon Journal* published the following lines:—"November 17, 1823. Yesterday, a convict at work on board of the *Orion*, on his return from rescuing a sailor, fell into the sea, and was drowned. His body was not recovered. It is presumed that it has been caught under the piles at the pier-head of the Arsenal. This man was registered by the number 9430, and his name was Jean Valjean."

IV.

WHILE Napoleon was dying at Longwood, the sixty thousand men fallen on the field of Waterloo tranquilly mouldered away, and something of their peace spread over the world. The congress of Vienna made from it the treaties of 1815, and Europe called that the Restoration.

Such is Waterloo.

We return, for it is a requirement of this book, to that fatal field of battle.

On the 18th of June, 1815, the moon was full. Its light favoured the ferocious pursuit of Blücher, disclosed the traces of the fugitives, delivered this helpless mass to the bloodthirsty Prussian cavalry, and aided in the massacre. Night sometimes lends such tragic assistance to catastrophe.

When the last gun had been fired, the plain of Mont Saint Jean remained deserted.

The English occupied the camp of the French; it is the usual verification of victory to sleep in the bed of the vanquished. They established their bivouac around Rossomme. The Prussians, let loose upon the fugitives, pushed forward. Wellington went to the village of Waterloo to make up his report to Lord Bathurst.

If ever the *sic vos non vobis* were applicable, it is surely to this village of Waterloo. Waterloo did nothing, and was two miles distant from the action. Mont Saint Jean was cannonaded, Hougomont was burned, Papelotte was burned, Planchenoit was burned, La Haie Sainte was taken by assault, La Belle-Alliance witnessed the meeting of the two conquerors ; these names are scarcely known, and Waterloo, which had nothing to do with the battle, has all the honour of it.

We are not of those who glorify war ; when the opportunity presents itself we describe its realities. War has frightful beauties which we have not concealed ; it has also, we must admit, some deformities. One of the most surprising is the eager spoliation of the dead after a victory. The day after a battle always dawns upon naked corpses.

Who does this ? Who thus sullies the triumph ? Whose is this hideous furtive hand which glides into the pocket of victory ? Who are these pickpockets following their trade in the wake of glory ? Some philosophers, Voltaire among others, affirm that they are precisely those who have achieved the glory. They are the same, say they, there is no exchange ; those who survive pillage those who succumb. The hero of the day is the vampire of the night. A man has a right, after all, to despoil in part a corpse which he has made.

For our part, we do not believe this. To gather laurels, and to steal the shoes from a dead man, seems to us impossible to the same hand.

One thing is certain, that after the conquerors come the robbers. But let us place the soldier, especially the soldier of to-day, beyond this charge.

Every army has a train, and there the accusation should lie. Bats, half brigand and half valet, all species of night-bird engendered by this twilight which is called war.

bearers of uniforms who never fight, sham invalids formidable cripples, interloping sutlers, travelling, sometimes with their wives, on little carts, and stealing what they sell, beggars offering themselves as guides to officers, army-servants, marauders ; armies on the march formerly—we do not speak of the present time—were followed by all these, to such an extent that, in technical language, they are called “camp-followers.” No army and no nation was responsible for these beings ; they spoke Italian and followed the Germans ; they spoke French and followed the English. It was by one of these wretches, a Spanish camp-follower who spoke French, that the Marquis of Fervacques, deceived by his Picardy gibberish, and taking him for one of us, was treacherously killed and robbed on the very battle-field during the night which followed the victory of Cerisoles. From marauding came the marauder. The detestable maxim, *Live on your enemy*, produced this leper, which rigid discipline alone can cure. There are reputations which are illusory ; it is not always known why certain generals, though they have been great, have been so popular. Turenne was adored by his soldiers because he tolerated pillage ; the permission to do wrong forms part of kindness ; Turenne was so kind that he allowed the Palatinate to be burned and put to the sword. There were seen in the wake of armies more or less of marauders according as the commander was more or less severe. Hoche and Marceau had no camp-followers ; Wellington—we gladly do him this justice—had few.

However, during the night of the 18th of June, the dead were despoiled. Wellington was rigid ; he ordered whoever should be taken in the act to be put to death ; but rapine is persevering. The marauders were robbing in one corner of the battle-field while they were shooting them in another.

The moon was an evil genius on this plain.

Towards midnight a man was prowling or rather crawling along the sunken road of Ohain. He was, to all appearance, one of those whom we have just described, neither English nor French, peasant nor soldier, less a man than a ghoul, attracted by the scent of the corpses, counting theft for victory, coming to rifle Waterloo. He was dressed in a blouse which was in part a capote, was restless and daring, looking behind and before as he went. Who was this man? Night, probably, knew more of his doings than day! He had no knapsack, but evidently large pockets under his capote. From time to time he stopped, examined the plain around him as if to see if he were observed, stooped down suddenly, stirred on the ground something silent and motionless, then rose up and skulked away. His gliding movement, his attitudes, his rapid and mysterious gestures, made him seem like those twilight spectres which haunt ruins, and which the old Norman legends call the Goers.

Certain nocturnal water-birds make such motions in marshes.

An eye which had carefully penetrated all this haze, might have noticed at some distance, standing as it were concealed behind the ruin which is on the Nivelles road at the corner of the route from Mont Saint Jean to Braine l'Alleud, a sort of little sutler's waggon, covered with tarred osiers, harnessed to a famished jade browsing nettles through her bit, and in the waggon a sort of woman seated on some trunks and packages. Perhaps there was some connection between this waggon and the prowler.

The night was serene. Not a cloud was in the zenith. What mattered it that the earth was red, the moon retained her whiteness. Such is the indifference of heaven. In the meadows, branches of trees broken by grape, but not fallen, and held by the bark, swung gently in the night wind. A

breath, almost a respiration, moved the brushwood. There was a quivering in the grass which seemed like the departure of souls.

The tread of the patrols and roundsmen of the English camp could be heard dinily in the distance.

Hougomont and La Haie Sainte continued to burn, making, one in the east and the other in the west, two great flames, to which was attached, like a necklace of rubies with two carbuncles at its extremities, the cordon of bivouac fires of the English, extending in an immense semicircle over the hills of the horizon.

We have spoken of the catastrophe of the road of Ohain. The heart almost sinks with terror at the thought of such a death for so many brave men.

If anything is frightful, if there be a reality which surpasses dreams, it is this: to live, to see the sun, to be in full possession of manly vigour, to have health and joy, to laugh sturdily, to rush towards a glory which dazzlingly invites you on, to feel a very pleasure in respiration, to feel your heart beat, to feel yourself a reasoning being, to speak, to think, to hope, to love; to have mother, to have wife, to have children, to have sunlight, and suddenly, in a moment, in less than a minute, to feel yourself buried in an abyss, to fall, to roll, to crush, to be crushed, to see the grain, the flowers, the leaves, the branches, to be able to seize upon nothing, to feel your sword useless, men under you, horses over you, to strike about you in vain, your bones broken by some kick in the darkness, to feel a heel which makes your eyes leap from their sockets, to grind the horseshoes with rage in your teeth, to stifle, to howl, to twist, to be under all this, and to say: just now I was a living man!

There, where this terrible death-rattle had been, all was now silent. The cut of the sunken road was filled with horses and riders inextricably heaped together. Terrible entanglement. There were no longer slopes to the road;

dead bodies filled it even with the plain, and came to the edge of the banks like a well-measured bushel of barley. A mass of dead above, a river of blood below—such was this road on the evening of the 18th of June, 1815. The blood ran even to the Nivelles road, and oozed through in a large pool in front of the abattis of trees, which barred that road, at a spot which is still shown. It was, it will be remembered, at the opposite point, towards the road from Genappe, that the burying of the cuirassiers took place. The thickness of the mass of bodies was proportioned to the depth of the hollow road. Towards the middle, at a spot where it became shallower, over which Delord's division had passed, this bed of death became thinner.

The night prowler which we have just introduced to the reader went in this direction. He ferreted through this immense grave. He looked about. He passed an indescribably hideous review of the dead. He walked with his feet in blood.

Suddenly he stopped.

A few steps before him, in the sunken road, at a point where the mound of corpses ended, from under this mass of men and horses appeared an open hand, lighted by the moon.

This hand held something upon a finger which sparkled ; it was a gold ring.

The man stooped down, remained a moment, and when he rose again there was no ring upon that hand.

He did not rise up precisely ; he remained in a sinister and startled attitude, turning his back to the pile of dead, scrutinizing the horizon, on his knees, all the front of his body being supported on his two forefingers, his head raised just enough to peep above the edge of the hollow road. The fore paws of the jackal are adapted to certain actions.

Then, deciding upon his course, he arose.

At this moment he experienced a shock. He felt that he was held from behind.

He turned; it was the open hand, which had closed, seizing the lapel of his capote.

An honest man would have been frightened. This man began to laugh.

"Oh," said he, "it's only the dead man. I like a ghost better than a gendarme."

However, the hand relaxed and let go its hold. Strength is soon exhausted in the tomb.

"Ah ha !" returned the prowler, "is this dead man alive? Let us see."

He bent over again, rummaged among the heap, removed whatever impeded him, seized the hand, laid hold of the arm, disengaged the head, drew out the body, and some moments after dragged into the shadow of the hollow road an inanimate man, at least one who was senseless. It was a cuirassier, an officer; an officer, also, of some rank; a great gold epaulette protruded from beneath his cuirass, but he had no casque. A furious sabre cut had disfigured his face, where nothing but blood was to be seen. It did not seem, however, that he had any limbs broken; and by some happy chance, if the word is possible here, the bodies were arched above him in such a way as to prevent his being crushed. His eyes were closed.

He had on his cuirass the silver cross of the Legion of Honour.

The prowler tore off this cross, which disappeared in one of the gulfs which he had under his capote.

After which he felt the officer's fob, found a watch there, and took it. Then he rummaged in his vest and found a purse, which he pocketed.

When he had reached this phase of the succour he was lending the dying man, the officer opened his eyes.

"Thanks," said he feebly.

The rough movements of the man handling him, the coolness of the night, and breathing the fresh air freely, had roused him from his lethargy.

The prowler answered not. He raised his head. The sound of a footstep could be heard on the plain; probably it was some patrol who was approaching.

The officer murmured, for there were still signs of suffering in his voice,—

“Who has gained the battle?”

“The English,” answered the prowler.

The officer replied,—

“Search my pockets. You will there find a purse and a watch. Take them.”

This had already been done.

The prowler made a pretence of executing the command, and said,—

“There is nothing there.”

“I have been robbed,” replied the officer; “I am sorry. They would have been yours.”

The step of the patrol became more and more distinct.

“Somebody is coming,” said the prowler, making a movement as if he would go.

The officer, raising himself up painfully upon one arm, held him back.

“You have saved my life. Who are you?”

The prowler answered quick and low,—

“I belong, like yourself, to the French army. I must go. If I am taken I shall be shot. I have saved your life. Help yourself now.”

“What is your grade?”

“Sergeant.”

“What is your name?”

“Thénardier.”

“I shall not forget that name,” said the officer. “**And you, remember mine. My name is Pontmercy.**”



Book Second

FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISE TO THE DEPARTED.

I.

MONTFERMEIL is situated between Livry and Chelles, upon the southern slope of the high plateau which separates the Ourcq from the Marne. At present, it is a considerable town, adorned all the year round with stuccoed villas, and, on Sundays, with citizens in full blossom. In 1823 there were at Montfermeil neither so many white houses nor so many comfortable citizens; it was nothing but a village in the woods. You would find, indeed, here and there a few country seats of the last century, recognizable by their grand appearance, their balconies of twisted iron, and those long windows the little panes of which show all sorts of different greens upon the white of the closed shutters. But Montfermeil was none the less a village. Retired dry-goods merchants and amateur villagers had not yet discovered it. It was a peaceful and charming spot, and not upon the road to any place; the

inhabitants cheaply enjoyed that rural life which is so luxuriant and so easy of enjoyment. But water was scarce there on account of the height of the plateau.

They had to go a considerable distance for it. The end of the village towards Gagny drew its water from the magnificent ponds in the forest on that side; the other end, which surrounds the church and which is towards Chelles, found drinking-water only at a little spring on the side of the hill, near the road to Chelles, about fifteen minutes' walk from Montfermeil.

It was, therefore, a serious matter for each household to obtain its supply of water. The great houses, the aristocracy, the Thénardier tavern included, paid a penny a bucketful to an old man who made it his business, and whose income from the Montfermeil water-works was about eight sous per day; but this man worked only till seven o'clock in summer and five in the winter, and when night had come on, and the first-floor shutters were closed, whoever had no drinking-water went after it, or went without it.

This was the terror of the poor being whom the reader has not perhaps forgotten—little Cosette. It will be remembered that Cosette ~~was~~ ^{was} useful to the Thénardiens in two ways—they got pay from the mother and work from the child. Thus, when the mother ceased entirely to pay, we have seen why in the preceding chapters the Thénardiens kept Cosette. She saved them a servant. In that capacity she ran for water when it was wanted. So the child, always horrified at the idea of going to the spring at night, took good care that water should never be wanting at the house.

Christmas in the year 1823 was particularly brilliant at Montfermeil. The early part of the winter had been mild; so far there had been neither frost nor snow. Some jugglers from Paris had obtained permission from the Mayor to set up their stalls in the main street of the village,

and a company of pedlars had, under the same license, put up their booths in the square before the church, and even in the lane du Boulanger, upon which, as the reader perhaps remembers, the Thénardier chop-house was situated. This filled up the taverns and pot-houses, and gave to this little quiet place a noisy and joyous appearance.

On that Christmas evening several men, waggoners and pedlars, were seated at table and drinking around four or five candles in the low hall of the Thénardier tavern. This room resembled all bar-rooms; tables, pewter mugs, bottles, drinkers, smokers; little light, and much noise. The date, 1823, was, however, indicated by the two things then in vogue with the middle classes, which were on the table, a kaleidoscope and a fluted tin lamp. Thénardier, the wife, was looking to the supper, which was cooking before a bright blazing fire; the husband, Thénardier, was drinking with his guests and talking politics.

Cosette was at her usual place, seated on the cross-piece of the kitchen table, near the fireplace; she was clad in rags; her bare feet were in wooden shoes, and by the light of the fire she was knitting woollen stockings for the little Thénardiens. A young kitten was playing under the chairs. In a neighbouring room the fresh voices of two children were heard laughing and prattling; it was Eponine and Azelma.

In the chimney-corner, a cow-hide hung upon a nail.

At intervals, the cry of a very young child, which was somewhere in the house, was heard above the noise of the bar-room. This was a little boy which the woman had had some winters before—"She didn't know why," she said: "it was the cold weather,"—and which was a little more than three years old. The mother had nursed him, but did not love him. When the hungry clamour of the brat became too much to bear,—“Your boy is squalling,” said Thénardier, “why don't you go and see what he wants?”

"Bah!" answered the mother; "I am sick of him." And the poor little fellow continued to cry in the darkness.

II.

THE Thénardiens have hitherto been seen in this book in profile only; the time has come to turn this couple about and look at them on all sides.

Thénardier had just passed his fiftieth year; Madame Thénardier had reached her fortieth, which is the fiftieth for woman; so that there was an equilibrium of age between the husband and wife.

The reader has perhaps, since her first appearance, preserved some remembrance of this huge Thénardiess—for such we shall call the female of this species,—large, blonde, red, fat, brawny, square, enormous, and agile; she belonged, as we have said, to the race of those colossal wild women who posturize at fairs with paving stones hung in their hair. She did everything about the house, the chamber-work, the washing, the cooking, anything she pleased, and played the deuce generally. Cosette was her only servant; a mouse in the service of an elephant. Everything trembled at the sound of her voice; windows and furniture as well as people. Her broad face, covered with freckles, had the appearance of a skimmer. She had beard. She was the ideal of a butcher's boy dressed in petticoats. She swore splendidly; she prided herself on being able to crack a nut with her fist. Apart from the novels she had read, which at times gave you an odd glimpse of the affected lady under the ogress, the idea of calling her a woman never would have occurred to anybody. This Thénardiess seemed like a cross between a wench and a fishwoman. If you heard her speak, you would say it is a gendarme; if you saw her drink, you would say it

is a cartman; if you saw her handle Cosette, you would say it is the hangman. When at rest, a tooth protruded from her mouth.

The other Thénardier was a little man, meagre, pale, angular, bony, and lean, who appeared to be sick, and whose health was excellent; here his knavery began. He smiled habitually as a matter of business, and tried to be polite to everybody, even to the beggar to whom he refused a penny. He had the look of a weazel, and the mien of a man of letters. He had a strong resemblance to the portraits of the Abbé Delille. He affected drinking with waggoners. Nobody ever saw him drunk. He smoked a large pipe. He wore a blouse, and under it an old black coat. He made pretensions to literature and materialism. It will be remembered, that he pretended to have been in the service; he related with some pomp that at Waterloo, being sergeant in a Sixth or Ninth Light something, he alone, against a squadron of Hussars of Death, had covered with his body, and saved amid a shower of grape, "a general dangerously wounded." Hence the flaming picture on his sign, and the name of his inn, which was spoken of in that region as the "tavern of the sergeant of Waterloo." He was liberal, classical, and a Bonapartist. He had subscribed for the *Champ d'Asile*. It was said in the village that he had studied for the priesthood.

We believe that he had only studied in Holland to be an innkeeper. This whelp of the composite order was, according to all probability, some Fleming of Lille in Flanders, a Frenchman in Paris, a Belgian in Brussels, conveniently on the fence between the two frontiers. We understand his prowess at Waterloo. As we have seen, he exaggerated it a little. Ebb and flow, wandering, adventure, was his element; a violated conscience is followed by a loose life; and, without doubt, at the stormy epoch of the 18th of June, 1815, Thénardier belonged to that

species of marauding sutlers of whom we have spoken, scouring the country, robbing here and selling there, and travelling in family style, man, woman, and children, in some rickety carry-all, in the wake of marching troops, with the instinct to attach himself always to the victorious army. This campaign over, having, as he said, some "quibus," he had opened a "chop-house" at Montfermeil.

This "quibus," composed of purses and watches, gold rings and silver crosses, gathered at the harvest time in the furrows sown with corpses, did not form a great total, and had not lasted this sutler, now become a tavern keeper, very long.

Thénardier had that indescribable stiffness of gesture which, with an oath, reminds you of the barracks, and, with a sign of the cross, of the seminary. He was a fine talker. He was fond of being thought learned. Nevertheless, the schoolmaster remarked that he made mistakes in pronunciation. He made out travellers' bills in a superior style, but practised eyes sometimes found them faulty in orthography. Thénardier was sly, greedy, lounging, and clever. He did not disdain servant-girls, consequently his wife had no more of them. This giantess was jealous. It seemed to her that this little, lean, and yellow man must be the object of universal desire.

Thénardier, above all a man of astuteness and poise, was a rascal of the subdued order. This is the worst species; there is hypocrisy in it.

Not that Thénardier was not on occasion capable of anger, quite as much so as his wife; but that was very rare, and at such times, as if he were at war with the whole human race, as if he had in him a deep furnace of hatred, as if he were of those who are perpetually avenging themselves, who accuse everybody about them of the evils that befall them, and are always ready to throw on the first comer, as legitimate grievance, the sum-total of the decep-

tions, failures, and calamities of their life—as all this leaven worked in him, and boiled up into his mouth and eyes, he was frightful. Woe to him who came within reach of his fury then !

Besides all his other qualities, Thénardier was attentive and penetrating, silent or talkative as occasion required, and always with great intelligence. He had somewhat the look of sailors accustomed to squinting the eye in looking through spy-glasses. Thénardier was a statesman.

Every new-comer who entered the chop-house said, on seeing the Thénardiess : There is the master of the house. It was an error. She was not even *the mistress*. The husband was both master and mistress. She performed, he created. He directed everything by a sort of invisible and continuous magnetic action. A word sufficed, sometimes a sign ; the mastodon obeyed. Thénardier was to her, without her being really aware of it, a sort of being apart and sovereign. She had the virtues of her order of creation ; never would she have differed in any detail with “ Monsieur Thénardier ”—nor—impossible supposition—would she have publicly quarrelled with her husband, on any matter whatever. Never had she committed “ before company ” that fault of which women are so often guilty, and which is called, in parliamentary language, discovering the crown. Although their accord had no other result than evil, there was food for contemplation in the submission of the Thénardiess to her husband. This bustling mountain of flesh moved under the little finger of this frail despot. It was, viewed from its dwarfed and grotesque side, this great universal fact—the homage of matter to spirit ; for certain deformities have their origin in the depths even of eternal beauty. There was somewhat of the unknown in Thénardier ; hence the absolute empire of this man over this woman. At times, she looked upon him as upon a lighted candle ; at others, she felt him like a claw.

This woman was a formidable creation, who loved nothing but her children, and feared nothing but her husband. She was a mother because she was a mammal. Her maternal feelings stopped with her girls, and, as we shall see, did not extend to boys. The man had but one thought—to get rich.

He did not succeed. His great talents had no adequate opportunity. Thénardier at Montfermeil was ruining himself, if ruin is possible at zero. In Switzerland, or in the Pyrenees, this penniless rogue would have become a millionaire. But where fate places the innkeeper he must browse.

It is understood that the word *innkeeper* is employed here in a restricted sense, and does not extend to an entire class.

In this same year, 1823, Thénardier owed about fifteen hundred francs, of pressing debts, which rendered him moody.

However obstinately unjust destiny was to him, Thénardier was one of those men who best understood, to the greatest depth and in the most modern style, that which is a virtue among the barbarous, and a subject of merchandise among the civilized—hospitality. He was, besides, an admirable poacher, and was counted an excellent shot. He had a certain cool and quiet laugh which was particularly dangerous.

His theories of innkeeping sometimes sprang from him by flashes. He had certain professional aphorisms which he inculcated in the mind of his wife. “The duty of the innkeeper,” said he to her one day, emphatically, and in a low voice, “is to sell to the first comer, food, rest, light, fire, dirty linen, servants, fleas, and smiles; to stop travellers, empty small purses, and honestly lighten large ones; to receive families who are travelling, with respect; scrape **the man**, pluck **the woman**, and pick **the child**; to charge

for the open window, the closed window, the chimney-corner, the sofa, the chair, the stool, the bench, the feather-bed, the mattress, and the straw-bed ; to know how much the mirror is worn, and to tax that ; and, by the five hundred thousand devils, to make the traveller pay for everything, even to the flies that his dog eats !”

This man and this woman were cunning and rage married—a hideous and terrible pair.

While the husband calculated and schemed, the Thénardiess thought not of absent creditors, took no care either for yesterday or the morrow, and lived passionately in the present moment.

Such were these two beings. Cosette was between them, undergoing their double pressure, like a creature who is at the same time being bruised by a millstone and lacerated with pincers. The man and the woman had each a different way. Cosette was beaten unmercifully ; that came from the woman. She went barefoot in winter ; that came from the man.

Cosette ran up stairs and down stairs ; washed, brushed, scrubbed, swept, ran, tired herself, got out of breath, lifted heavy things, and, puny as she was, did the rough work. No pity ; a ferocious mistress, a malignant master. The Thénardier chop-house was like a snare, in which Cosette had been caught, and was trembling. The ideal of oppression was realized by this dismal servitude. It was something like a fly serving spiders.

The poor child was passive and silent.

When they find themselves in such condition at the dawn of existence, so young, so feeble, among men, what passes in these souls fresh from God !

III.

FOUR new guests had just come in.

Cosette was musing sadly; for, though she was only eight years old, she had already suffered so much that she mused with the mournful air of an old woman.

She had a black eye from a blow of the Thénardiess's fist, which made the Thénardiess say from time to time, "How ugly she is with her patch on her eye."

Cosette was then thinking that it was evening, late in the evening, that the bowls and pitchers in the rooms of the travellers who had arrived must be filled immediately, and that there was no more water in the cistern.

One thing comforted her a little; they did not drink much water in the Thénardier tavern. There were plenty of people there who were thirsty; but it was that kind of thirst which reaches rather towards the jug than the pitcher. Had anybody asked for a glass of water among these glasses of wine, he would have seemed a savage to all those men. However, there was an instant when the child trembled; the Thénardiess raised the cover of a kettle which was boiling on the range, then took a glass and hastily approached the cistern. She turned the faucet; the child had raised her head and followed all her movements. A thin stream of water ran from the faucet, and filled the glass half full.

"Here," said she, "there is no more water!" Then she was silent for a moment. The child held her breath.

"Pshaw!" continued the Thénardiess, examining the half-filled glass, "there is enough of it, such as it is."

Cosette resumed her work, but for more than a quarter of an hour she felt her heart leaping into her throat like a great ball.

She counted the minutes as they thus rolled away, and eagerly wished it were morning.

From time to time one of the drinkers would look out into the street and exclaim, "It is as black as an oven!" or, "It would take a cat to go along the street without a lantern to-night!" And Cosette shuddered.

All at once one of the pedlars who lodged in the tavern came in, and said in a harsh voice,—

"You have not watered my horse!"

"Yes, we have, sure," said the Thénardiess.

"I tell you no, ma'am," replied the pedlar.

Cosette came out from under the table.

"Oh, yes, Monsieur!" said she, "the horse did drink; he drank in the bucket, the bucket full, and 'twas me that carried it to him, and I talked to him."

This was not true. Cosette lied.

"Here is a girl as big as my fist, who can tell a lie as big as a house," exclaimed the pedlar. "I tell you that he has not had any water, little wench! He has a way of blowing when he has not had any water, that I know well enough."

Cosette persisted, and added in a voice stifled with anguish, and which could hardly be heard,—

"But he did drink a good deal."

"Come," continued the pedlar, in a passion, "that is enough; give my horse some water, and say no more about it."

Cosette went back under the table.

"Well, of course that is right," said the Thénardiess; "if the beast has not had any water, she must have some."

Then looking about her,—

"Well, what has become of that girl?"

She stooped down and discovered Cosette crouched at the other end of the table, almost under the feet of the drinkers.

"Aren't you coming?" cried the Thénardiess.

Cosette came out of the kind of hole where she had hidden. The Thénardiess continued,—

"Mademoiselle Dog-without-a-name, go and carry some drink to this horse."

"But, ma'am," said Cosette, feebly, "there is no water."

The Thénardiess threw the street door wide open.

"Well, go after some!"

Cosette hung her head, and went for an empty bucket that was by the chimney-corner.

The bucket was larger than she, and the child could have sat down in it comfortably.

The Thénardiess went back to her range, and tasted what was in the kettle with a wooden spoon, grumbling the while.

"There is some at the spring. She is the worst girl that ever was. I think 'twould have been better if I'd left out the onions."

Then she fumbled in a drawer where there were some pennies, pepper, and garlic.

"Here, Mamselle Toad," added she, "get a big loaf at the baker's as you come back. Here is fifteen sous."

Cosette had a little pocket in the side of her apron; she took the piece without saying a word, and put it in that pocket.

Then she remained motionless, bucket in hand, the open door before her. She seemed to be waiting for somebody to come to her aid.

"Get along!" cried the Thénardiess.

Cosette went out. The door closed.

IV.

THE row of booths extended along the street from the church, the reader will remember, as far as the Thénardier

tavern. These booths, on account of the approaching passage of the citizens on their way to the midnight mass, were all illuminated with candles, burning in paper lanterns, which, as the schoolmaster of Montfermeil, who was at that moment seated at one of Thénardier's tables, said, produced a magical effect. In retaliation, not a star was to be seen in the sky.

The last of these stalls, set up exactly opposite Thénardier's door, was a toy-shop, all glittering with trinkets, glass beads, and things magnificent in tin. In the first rank, and in front, the merchant had placed, upon a bed of white napkins, a great doll, nearly two feet high, dressed in a robe of pink-crape, with golden wheat-ears on its head, and which had real hair and enamel eyes. The whole day this marvel had been displayed to the bewilderment of the passers under ten years of age, but there had not been found in Montfermeil a mother rich enough or prodigal enough to give it to her child. Eponine and Azelma had passed hours in contemplating it, and Cosette herself, furtively, it is true, had dared to look at it.

At the moment when Cosette went out, bucket in hand, all gloomy and overwhelmed as she was, she could not help raising her eyes towards this wonderful doll—towards *the lady*, as she called it. The poor child stopped petrified. She had not seen this doll so near before.

This whole booth seemed a palace to her ; this doll was not a doll, it was a vision. It was joy, splendour, riches, happiness, and it appeared in a sort of chimerical radiance to this unfortunate little being, buried so deeply in a cold and dismal misery. Cosette was measuring with the sad and simple sagacity of childhood the abyss which separated her from that doll. She was saying to herself that one must be a queen, or at least a princess, to have a "thing" like that. She gazed upon this beautiful pink dress, this beautiful smooth hair, and she was thinking, "How happy

must be that doll!" Her eye could not turn away from this fantastic booth. The longer she looked, the more she was dazzled. She thought she saw paradise. There were other dolls behind the large one that appeared to her to be fairies and genii. The merchant walking to and fro in the back part of his stall suggested the Eternal Father.

In this adoration she forgot everything, even the errand on which she had been sent. Suddenly the harsh voice of the Thénardiess called her back to the reality, "How, jade, haven't you gone yet? Hold on; I am coming for you! I'd like to know what she's doing there? Little monster, be off!"

The Thénardiess had glanced into the street, and perceived Cosette in ecstasy.

Cosette fled with her bucket, running as fast as she could.

V.

As the Thénardier tavern was in that part of the village which is near the church, Cosette had to go to the spring in the woods towards Chelles to draw water.

She looked no more at the displays in the booths, so long as she was in the lane Boulanger; and in the vicinity of the church, the illuminated stalls lighted the way, but soon the last gleam from the last stall disappeared. The poor child found herself in darkness. She became buried in it. Only, as she became the prey of a certain sensation, she shook the handle of the bucket as much as she could on her way. That made a noise, which kept her company.

The further she went, the thicker became the darkness. There was no longer anybody in the street. However, she met a woman who turned round on seeing her pass, and remained motionless, muttering between her teeth, "Where in the world can that child be going? Is it a phantom

child?" Then the woman recognized Cosette. "Oh," said she "it is the Lark!"

Cosette thus passed through the labyrinth of crooked and deserted streets, which terminates the village of Montfermeil towards Chelles. As long as she had houses, or even walls, on the sides of the road, she went on boldly enough. From time to time, she saw the light of a candle through the cracks of a shutter; it was light and life to her; there were people there; that kept up her courage. However, as she advanced, her speed slackened as if mechanically. When she had passed the corner of the last house, Cosette stopped. To go beyond the last booth had been difficult; to go further than the last house became impossible. She put the bucket on the ground, buried her hands in her hair, and began to scratch her head slowly, a motion peculiar to terrified and hesitating children. It was Montfermeil no longer, it was the open country; dark and deserted space was before her. She looked with despair into this darkness where nobody was, where there were beasts, where there were perhaps ghosts. She looked intensely, and she heard the animals walking in the grass, and she distinctly saw the ghosts moving in the trees. Then she seized her bucket again; fear gave her boldness: "Pshaw," said she, "I will tell her there isn't any more water!" And she resolutely went back into Montfermeil.

She had scarcely gone a hundred steps when she stopped again, and began to scratch her head. Now, it was the Thénardiess that appeared to her; the hideous Thénardiess, with her hyena mouth, and wrath flashing from her eyes. The child cast a pitiful glance before her and behind her. What could she do? What would become of her? Where should she go? Before her, the spectre of the Thénardiess; behind her, all the phantoms of night and of the forest. It was at the Thénardiess that she recoiled.

She took the road to the spring again, and began to run. She ran out of the village; she ran into the woods, seeing nothing, hearing nothing. She did not stop running until out of breath, and even then she staggered on. She went right on, desperate.

Even while running, she wanted to cry.

The nocturnal tremulousness of the forest wrapped her about completely.

She thought no more; she saw nothing more. The immensity of night confronted this little creature. On one side, the infinite shadow; on the other, an atom.

It was only seven or eight minutes walk from the edge of the woods to the spring. Cosette knew the road, from travelling it several times a day. Strange thing, she did not lose her way. A remnant of instinct guided her blindly. But she neither turned her eyes to the right nor to the left, for fear of seeing things in the trees and in the bushes. Thus she arrived at the spring.

It was a small natural basin, made by the water in the loamy soil, about two feet deep, surrounded with moss, and with that long figured grass called Henry Fourth's collars, and paved with a few large stones. A brook escaped from it with a gentle, tranquil murmur.

Cosette did not take time to breathe. It was very dark, but she was accustomed to come to this fountain. She felt with her left hand in the darkness for a young oak which bent over the spring and usually served her as a support, found a branch, swung herself from it, bent down and plunged the bucket in the water. She was for a moment so excited that her strength was tripled. When she was thus bent over, she did not notice that the pocket of her apron emptied itself into the spring. The fifteen-sous piece fell into the water. Cosette neither saw it nor heard it fall. She drew out the bucket almost full and set it on the grass.

This done, she perceived that her strength was exhausted. She was anxious to start at once; but the effort of filling the bucket had been so great that it was impossible for her to take a step. She was compelled to sit down. She fell upon the grass and remained in a crouching posture.

She closed her eyes, then she opened them, without knowing why, without the power of doing otherwise. At her side, the water shaken in the bucket made circles that resembled serpents of white fire.

Above her head, the sky was covered with vast black clouds which were like sheets of smoke. The tragic mask of night seemed to bend vaguely over this child.

Jupiter was setting in the depths of the horizon.

The child looked with a startled eye upon that great star which she did not know and which made her afraid. The planet, in fact, was at that moment very near the horizon, and was crossing a dense bed of mist which gave it a horrid redness. The mist, gloomily empurpled, magnified the star. One would have called it a luminous wound.

A cold wind blew from the plain. The woods were dark, without any rustling of leaves, without any of those vague and fresh coruscations of summer. Great branches drew themselves up fearfully. Mean and shapeless bushes whistled in the glades. The tall grass wriggled under the north wind like eels. The brambles twisted about like long arms seeking to seize their prey in their claws. Some dry **weeds**, driven by the wind, passed rapidly by, and appeared to flee with dismay before something that was following. The prospect was dismal.

Darkness makes the brain giddy. Man needs light. Whoever plunges into the opposite of day feels his heart chilled. When the eye sees blackness, the mind sees trouble. In an eclipse, in night, in the sooty darkness, there is anxiety even to the strongest. Nobody walks

alone at night in the forest without trembling. Darkness and trees, two formidable depths—a reality of chimeras appears in the indistinct distance. The Inconceivable outlines itself a few steps from you with a spectral clearness. You see floating in space or in your brain something strangely vague and unseizable as the dreams of sleeping flowers. There are fierce phantoms in the horizon. You breathe in the odours of the great black void. You are afraid, and are tempted to look behind you. The hollowness of night, the haggardness of all things, the silent profiles that fade away as you advance, the obscure dishevelments, angry clumps, livid pools, the gloomy reflected in the funereal, the sepulchral immensity of silence, the possible unknown beings, the swaying of mysterious branches, the frightful twistings of the trees, long spires of shivering grass—against all this you have no defence. There is no bravery which does not shudder and feel the nearness of anguish. You feel something hideous, as if the soul were amalgamating with the shadow. This penetration of the darkness is inexpressibly dismal for a child.

Without being conscious of what she was experiencing, Cosette felt that she was seized by this black enormity of nature. It was not merely terror that held her, but something more terrible even than terror. She shuddered. Words fail to express the peculiar strangeness of that shudder which chilled her through and through. Her eye had become wild. She felt that perhaps she would be compelled to return there at the same hour the next night.

Then, by a sort of instinct, to get out of this singular state, which she did not understand, but which terrified her, she began to count aloud one, two, three, four, up to ten, and when she had finished she began again. This restored her to a real perception of things about her. Her hands, which she had wet in drawing the water, felt cold.

She arose. Her fear had returned, a natural and insurmountable fear. She had only one thought, to fly ; to fly with all her might, across woods, across fields, to houses, to windows, to lighted candles. Her eyes fell upon the bucket that was before her. Such was the dread with which the Thénardiess inspired her, that she did not dare to go without the bucket of water. She grasped the handle with both hands. She could hardly lift the bucket.

She went a dozen steps in this manner, but the bucket was full, it was heavy ; she was compelled to rest it on the ground. She breathed an instant, then grasped the handle again and walked on, this time a little longer. But she had to stop again. After resting a few seconds she started on. She walked bending forward, her head down, like an old woman ; the weight of the bucket strained and stiffened her thin arms. The iron handle was numbing and freezing her little wet hands ; from time to time she had to stop, and every time she stopped, the cold water that splashed from the bucket fell upon her naked knees. This took place in the depth of a wood at night, in the winter, far from all human sight ; it was a child of eight years ; there was none but God at that moment who saw this sad thing.

She breathed with a kind of mournful rattle ; sobs choked her, but she did not dare to weep, so fearful was she of the Thénardiess, even at a distance. She always imagined that the Thénardiess was near.

However, she could not make much headway in this manner, and was getting along very slowly. She tried hard to shorten her resting spells, and to walk as far as possible between them. She remembered with anguish that it would take her more than an hour to return to Montfermeil thus, and that the Thénardiess would beat her. This anguish added to her dismay at being alone in the woods at night. She was worn out with fatigue, and was not yet

out of the forest. Arriving near an old chestnut tree which she knew, she made a last halt, longer than the others, to get well rested, then she gathered all her strength, took up the bucket again, and began to walk on courageously. Meanwhile the poor little despairing thing could not help crying, "Oh, dear ! oh, dear !"

At that moment she felt at once that the weight of the bucket was gone. A hand which seemed enormous to her had just caught the handle, and was carrying it easily. She raised her head. A large dark form, straight and erect, was walking beside her in the gloom. It was a man who had come up behind her, and whom she had not heard. This man, without saying a word, had grasped the handle of the bucket she was carrying.

There are instincts for all the crises of life.

The child was not afraid.

VL

In the afternoon of that same Christmas-day, 1823, a man walked a long time in the most deserted portion of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital at Paris. This man had the appearance of some one who was looking for lodgings, and seemed to stop by preference before the most modest houses of this dilapidated part of the Faubourg Saint Marceau.

We shall see further on that this man did in fact hire a room in this isolated quarter.

This man, in his dress as in his whole person, realized the type of what might be called the mendicant of good society—extreme misery being combined with extreme neatness. It is a rare coincidence which inspires intelligent hearts with this double respect that we feel for him who

is very poor and for him who is very worthy. He wore a round hat, very old and carefully brushed, a long coat, completely threadbare, of coarse yellow cloth, a colour which was in no wise extraordinary at that epoch, a large waistcoat with pockets of antique style, black trousers worn grey at the knees, black woollen stockings, and thick shoes with copper buckles. One would have called him an old preceptor of a good family, returned from the general exile. From his hair, which was entirely white, from his wrinkled brow, from his livid lips, from his face, in which everything breathed exhaustion and weariness of life, one would have supposed him considerably over sixty. From his firm though slow step, and the singular vigour impressed upon all his motions, one would hardly have thought him fifty. The wrinkles on his forehead were well disposed, and would have prepossessed in his favour any one who observed him with attention. His lip contracted with a strange expression, which seemed severe and yet which was humble. There was in the depths of his eye an indescribably mournful serenity. He carried in his left hand a small package tied in a handkerchief, with his right he leaned upon a sort of staff cut from a hedge. This staff had been finished with some care, and did not look very badly; the knots were smoothed down, and a coral head had been formed with red wax; it was a cudgel, and it seemed a cane.

There are few people on that boulevard, especially in winter. This man appeared to avoid them rather than seek them, but without affectation.

At that epoch the King, Louis XVIII., went almost every day to Choisy-le-Roy. It was one of his favourite rides. About two o'clock, almost invariably, the carriage and the royal cavalcade were seen to pass at full speed through the Boulevard de l'Hôpital.

This supplied the place of watch and clock to the poor

women of the quarter, who would say, "It is two o'clock, there he is going back to the Tuileries."

This unfailing passage of the King at the same hour was then the daily event of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital.

The promenader in the yellow coat evidently did not belong to the quarter, and probably not to Paris, for he was ignorant of this circumstance. When at two o'clock the royal carriage, surrounded by a squadron of silver-laced body-guard, turned into the boulevard, after passing La Salpêtrière, he appeared surprised, and almost frightened. There was no one else in the cross alley, and he retired hastily behind a corner of the side wall, but this did not prevent the Duke d'Havré seeing him. The Duke d'Havré, as Captain of the Guards in waiting that day, was seated in the carriage opposite the King. He said to his Majesty: "There is a man who has a bad look." Some policemen, who were clearing the passage for the King, also noticed him; one of them was ordered to follow him. But the man plunged into the little solitary streets of the faubourg, and as night was coming on the officer lost his track, as is established by a report addressed on the same evening to the Comte Anglès, Minister of State, Préfect of Police.

When the man in the yellow coat had thrown the officer off his track, he turned about, not without looking back many times to make sure that he was not followed. At a quarter past four, that is to say, after dark, he passed in front of the theatre of the Porte Saint Martin, where the play that day was *The Two Convicts*. The poster, lit up by the reflection from the theatre, seemed to strike him, for, although he was walking rapidly, he stopped to read it. A moment after he was in the *cul-de-sac* de la Planchette, and entered the "Pewter Platter," which was then the office of the Lagny stage. This stage started at half-past four. The horses were harnessed, and the travellers,

who had been called by the driver hastily, were climbing the high iron steps of the vehicle.

The man asked,—

“Have you a seat?”

“Only one, beside me, on the box,” said the driver.

“I will take it.”

“Get up, then.”

Before starting, however, the driver cast a glance at the poor apparel of the traveller, and at the smallness of his bundle, and took his pay.

“Are you going through to Lagny?” asked the driver.

“Yes,” said the man.

The traveller paid through to Lagny.

They started off. When they had passed the *barrière*, the driver tried to start a conversation, but the traveller answered only in monosyllables. The driver concluded to whistle, and swear at his horses.

The driver wrapped himself up in his cloak. It was cold. The man did not appear to notice it. In this way they passed through Gournay and Neuilly-sur-Marne. About six o'clock in the evening they were at Chelles. The driver stopped to let his horses breathe, in front of the waggoners' tavern established in the old buildings of the royal abbey.

“I will get down here,” said the man.

He took his bundle and stick, and jumped down from the stage.

A moment afterwards he had disappeared.

He did not go into the tavern.

When, a few minutes afterwards, the stage started off for Lagny, it did not overtake him in the main street of Chelles.

The driver turned to the inside passengers,—

“There,” said he, “is a man who does not belong here, for I don't know him. He has an appearance of not having a sou; however, he don't stick about money; he pays to

Lagny, and he only goes to Chelles. It is night, all the houses are shut, he don't go to the tavern, and we don't overtake him. He must, then, have sunk into the ground."

The man had not sunk into the ground, but he had hurried rapidly in the darkness along the main street of Chelles; then he had turned to the left, before reaching the church, into the cross-road leading to Montfermeil, like one who knew the country and had been that way before.

He followed this road rapidly. At the spot where it intersects the old road bordered with trees that goes from Gagny to Lagny, he heard footsteps approaching. He concealed himself hastily in a ditch, and waited there till the people who were passing were a good distance off. The precaution was indeed almost superfluous, for, as we have already said, it was a very dark December night. There were scarcely two or three stars to be seen in the sky.

It is at this point that the ascent of the hill begins. The man did not return to the Montfermeil road; he turned to the right, across the fields, and gained the woods with rapid strides.

When he reached the wood, he slackened his pace, and began to look carefully at all the trees, pausing at every step, as if he were seeking and following a mysterious route known only to himself. There was a moment when he appeared to lose himself, and when he stopped, undecided. Finally he arrived, by continual groping, at a glade where there was a heap of large whitish stones. He made his way quickly towards these stones, and examined them with attention in the dusk of the night, as if he were passing them in review. A large tree, covered with those excrescences which are the warts of vegetation, was a few steps from the heap of stones. He went to this tree, and passed his hand over the bark of the trunk, as if he were seeking to recognize and to count all the warts.

Opposite this tree, which was an ash, there was a chest-

nut tree wounded in the bark, which had been staunched with a bandage of zinc nailed on. He rose on tiptoe and touched that band of zinc.

Then he stamped for some time upon the ground in the space between the tree and the stones, like one who would be sure that the earth had not been freshly stirred.

This done, he took his course and resumed his walk through the woods.

This was the man who had fallen in with Cosette.

As he made his way through the copse in the direction of Montfermeil, he had perceived that little shadow, struggling along with a groan, setting her burden on the ground, then taking it up and going on again. He had approached her and seen that it was a very young child carrying an enormous bucket of water. Then he had gone to the child, and silently taken hold of the handle of the bucket.

VII.

Cosette, we have said, was not afraid.

The man spoke to her. His voice was serious, and was almost a whisper.

"My child, that is very heavy for you which you are carrying there."

Cosette raised her head and answered,—

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Give it to me," the man continued, "I will carry it for you."

Cosette let go of the bucket. The man walked along with her.

"It is very heavy, indeed," said he to himself. Then he added,—

"Little girl, how old are you?"

"Eight years, Monsieur."

"And have you come far in this way?"

"From the spring in the woods."

"And are you going far?"

"A good quarter of an hour from here."

The man remained a moment without speaking, then he said abruptly,—

"You have no mother, then?"

"I don't know," answered the child.

Before the man had had time to say a word, she added,—

"I don't believe I have. All the rest have one. For my part, I have none."

And after a silence, she added,—

"I believe I never had any."

The man stopped, put the bucket on the ground, stooped down and placed his hands upon the child's shoulders, making an effort to look at her and see her face in the darkness.

The thin and puny face of Cosette was vaguely outlined in the livid light of the sky.

"What is your name?" said the man.

"Cosette."

It seemed as if the man had an electric shock. He looked at her again, then letting go of her shoulders, took up the bucket and walked on.

A moment after, he asked,—

"Little girl, where do you live?"

"At Montfermeil, if you know it."

"It is there that we are going?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

He made another pause, then he began,—

"Who is it that has sent you out into the woods after water at this time of night?"

"Madame Thénardier."

The man resumed with a tone of voice which he tried

to render indifferent, but in which there was nevertheless a singular tremour,—

“What does she do, your Madame Thénardier?”

“She is my mistress,” said the child. “She keeps the tavern.”

“The tavern!” said the man. “Well, I am going there to lodge to-night. Show me the way.”

“We are going there,” said the child.

The man walked very fast. Cosette followed him without difficulty. She felt fatigue no more. From time to time, she raised her eyes towards this man with a sort of tranquillity and inexpressible confidence. She had never been taught to turn towards Providence and to pray. However, she felt in her bosom something that resembled hope and joy, and which rose towards heaven.

A few minutes passed. The man spoke,—

“Is there no servant at Madame Thénardier’s?”

“No, Monsieur.”

“Are you alone?”

“Yes, Monsieur.”

There was another interval of silence. Cosette raised her voice,—

“That is, there are two little girls.”

“What little girls?”

“Ponine and Zelma.”

The child simplified in this way the romantic names dear to the mother.

“What are Ponine and Zelma?”

“They are Madame Thénardier’s young ladies—you might say her daughters.”

“And what do they do?”

“Oh!” said the child, “they have beautiful dolls—things which there’s gold in; they are full of business. They play—they amuse themselves.”

“All day long?”

"Yes, Monsieur."

"And you?"

"Me! I work."

"All day long?"

The child raised her large eyes, in which there was a tear, which could not be seen in the darkness, and answered softly,—

"Yes, Monsieur."

She continued after an interval of silence,—

"Sometimes, when I have finished my work and they are willing, I amuse myself also."

"How do you amuse yourself?"

"The best I can. They let me alone. But I have not many playthings. Ponine and Zelma are not willing for me to play with their dolls. I have only a little lead sword not longer than that."

The child showed her little finger.

"And which does not cut?"

"Yes, Monsieur," said the child, "it cuts lettuce and flies' heads."

They reached the village; Cosette guided the stranger through the streets. They passed by the bakery, but Cosette did not think of the bread she was to have brought back. The man questioned her no more, and now maintained a mournful silence. When they had passed the church, the man, seeing all these booths in the street, asked Cosette,—

"Is it fair-time here?"

"No, Monsieur, it is Christmas."

As they drew near the tavern, Cosette timidly touched his arm,

"Monsieur."

"What, my child?"

"Here we are close by the house."

"Well?"

"Will you let me take the bucket now?"

"What for?"

"Because, if Madame sees that anybody brought it ~~to~~ me, she will beat me."

The man gave her the bucket. A moment after they were at the door of the chop-house.

VIII.

Cosette could not help casting one look towards the grand doll still displayed in the toy-shop, then she rapped. The door opened. The Thénardiess appeared with a candle in her hand.

"Oh! it is you, you little beggar! Lud-a-massy! you have taken your time! she has been playing, the wench!"

"Madame," said Cosette, trembling, "here is a gentleman who is coming to lodge."

The Thénardiess very quickly replaced her fierce air by her amiable grimace, a change at sight peculiar to inn-keepers, and looked for the new-comer with eager eyes.

"Is it Monsieur?" said she.

"Yes, Madame," answered the man, touching his hat.

Rich travellers are not so polite. This gesture and the sight of the stranger's costume and baggage, which the Thénardiess passed in review at a glance, made the amiable grimace disappear and the fierce air reappear. She added, drily,—

"Enter, goodman."

The "goodman" entered. The Thénardiess cast a second glance at him, examined particularly his long coat, which was absolutely threadbare, and his hat, which was somewhat broken, and with a nod, a wink, and a turn of her nose, consulted her husband, who was still drinking with the waggoners.

The husband answered by that imperceptible shake of the forefinger which, supported by a protrusion of the lips, signifies in such a case, "complete destitution." Upon this, the Thénardiess exclaimed,—

"Ah! my brave man, I am very sorry, but I have no room."

"Put me where you will," said the man, "in the garret, in the stable. I will pay as if I had a room."

"Forty sous."

"Forty sous. Well."

"In advance."

"Forty sous," whispered a waggoner to the Thénardiess, "but it is only twenty sous."

"It is forty sous for him," replied the Thénardiess, in the same tone. "I don't lodge poor people for less."

"That is true," added her husband softly; "it ruins a house to have this sort of people."

Meanwhile the man, after leaving his stick and bundle on a bench, had seated himself at a table on which Cosette had been quick to place a bottle of wine and a glass. The pedlar who had asked for the bucket of water had gone himself to carry it to his horse. Cosette had resumed her place under the kitchen table and her knitting.

The man, who hardly touched his lips with the wine he had turned out, was contemplating the child with a strange attention.

Cosette was ugly. Happy, she might perhaps have been pretty. We have already sketched this little pitiful face. Cosette was thin and pale; she was nearly eight years old, but one would have hardly thought her six. Her large eyes, sunk in a sort of shadow, were almost put out by continual weeping. The corners of her mouth had that curve of habitual anguish which is seen in the condemned and in the hopelessly sick. Her hands were, as her mother had guessed, "covered with chilblains." The light of the

fire, which was shining upon her, made her bones stand out, and rendered her thinness fearfully visible. As she was always shivering, she had acquired the habit of drawing her knees together. Her whole dress was nothing but a rag, which would have excited pity in the summer, and which excited horror in the winter. She had on nothing but cotton, and that full of holes; not a rag of woollen.

Her skin showed here and there, and black and blue spots could be distinguished, which indicated the places where the Thénardiess had touched her. Her naked legs were red and rough. The hollows under her collar bones would make one weep. The whole person of this child, her gait, her attitude, the sound of her voice, the intervals between one word and another, her looks, her silence, her least motion, expressed and uttered a single idea—fear.

Fear was spread all over her; she was, so to say, covered with it; fear drew back her elbows against her sides, drew her heels under her skirt, made her take the least possible room, prevented her from breathing more than was absolutely necessary, and had become what might be called her bodily habit, without possible variation, except of increase. There was in the depth of her eye an expression of astonishment mingled with terror.

This fear was such that on coming in, all wet as she was, Cosette had not dared go and dry herself by the fire, but had gone silently to her work.

The expression of the countenance of this child of eight years was habitually so sad, and sometimes so tragical, that it seemed, at certain moments, as if she were in the way of becoming an idiot or a demon.

Never, as we have said, had she known what it is to pray, never had she set foot within a church. "How can I spare the time?" said the Thénardiess.

The man in the yellow coat did not take his eyes from Cosette

Suddenly the Thénardiess exclaimed out,—

“Oh! I forgot! that bread!”

Cosette, according to her custom whenever the Thénardiess raised her voice, sprang out quickly from under the table.

She had entirely forgotten the bread. She had recourse to the expedient of children who are always terrified. She lied.

“Madame, the baker was shut.”

“You ought to have knocked.”

“I did knock, Madame.”

“Well?”

“He didn’t open.”

“I’ll find out to-morrow if that is true,” said the Thénardiess, “and if you are lying you will lead a pretty dance. Meantime, give me back the fifteen-sous piece.”

Cosette plunged her hand into her apron pocket, and turned white. The fifteen-sous piece was not there.

“Come,” said the Thénardiess, “didn’t you hear me?”

Cosette turned her pocket inside out; there was nothing there. What could have become of that money? The little unfortunate could not utter a word. She was petrified.

“Have you lost it—the fifteen-sous piece?” screamed the Thénardiess, “or do you want to steal it from me?”

At the same time she reached her arm towards the cow-hide hanging in the chimney-corner.

This menacing movement gave Cosette the strength to cry out,—

“Forgive me! Madame! Madame! I won’t do so any more!”

The Thénardiess took down the whip.

Meanwhile the man in the yellow coat had been fumbling in his waistcoat-pocket, without being noticed. The other travellers were drinking or playing cards, and paid no attention to anything.

Cosette was writhing with anguish in the chimney-corner, trying to gather up and hide her poor half-naked limbs. The Thénardiess raised her arm.

"I beg your pardon, Madame," said the man, "but I just now saw something fall out of the pocket of that little girl's apron and roll away. That may be it."

At the same time he stooped down and appeared to search on the floor for an instant.

"Just so, here it is," said he, rising.

And he handed a silver piece to the Thénardiess.

"Yes, that is it," said she.

That was not it, for it was a twenty-sous piece, but the Thénardiess found her profit in it. She put the piece in her pocket, and contented herself with casting a ferocious look at the child and saying,—

"Don't let that happen again, ever."

Cosette went back to what the Thénardiess called "her hole," and her large eye, fixed upon the unknown traveller, began to assume an expression that it had never known before. It was still only an artless astonishment, but a sort of blind confidence was associated with it.

"Oh! you want supper?" asked the Thénardiess of the traveller.

He did not answer. He seemed to be thinking deeply.

"What is that man?" said she, between her teeth. "It is some frightful pauper. He hasn't a penny for his supper. Is he going to pay me for his lodging only? It is very lucky, anyway, that he didn't think to steal the money that was on the floor."

A door now opened, and Eponine and Azelma came in.

They were really two pretty little girls, rather city girls than peasants, very charming, one with her well-polished auburn tresses, the other with her long black braids falling down her back, and both so lively, neat, plump, fresh, and healthy, that it was a pleasure to see them. They were

warmly clad, but with such maternal art, that the thickness of the stuff detracted nothing from the coquetry of the fit. Winter was provided against without effacing spring. These two little girls shed light around them. Moreover, they were regnant. In their toilet, in their gaiety, in the noise they made, there was sovereignty. When they entered, the Thénardiess said to them in a scolding tone, which was full of adoration, "Ah! you are here then, you children!"

Then, taking them upon her knees one after the other, smoothing their hair, tying over their ribbons, and finally letting them go with that gentle sort of shake which is peculiar to mothers, she exclaimed,—

"Are they dowdies!"

They went and sat down by the fire. They had a doll which they turned backwards and forwards upon their knees with many pretty prattlings. From time to time, Cosette raised her eyes from her knitting, and looked sadly at them as they were playing.

Eponine and Azelma did not notice Cosette. To them she was like the dog. These three little girls could not count twenty-four years among them all, and they already represented all human society; on one side envy, on the other disdain.

The doll of the Thénardier sisters was very much faded, and very old and broken; but it appeared none the less wonderful to Cosette, who had never in her life had a doll, *a real doll*, to use an expression that all children will understand.

All at once, the Thénardiess, who was continually going and coming about the room, noticed that Cosette's attention was distracted, and that instead of working she was busied with the little girls who were playing.

"Ah! I've caught you!" cried she. "That is the way you work! I'll make you work with a cowhide, I will."

The stranger, without leaving his chair, turned towards the Thénardiess.

"Madame," said he, smiling diffidently. "Pshaw! let her play!"

On the part of any traveller who had eaten a slice of mutton, and drunk two bottles of wine at his supper, and who had not had the appearance of *a horrid pauper*, such a wish would have been a command. But that a man who wore that hat should allow himself to have a desire, and that a man who wore that coat should permit himself to have a wish, was what the Thénardiess thought ought not to be tolerated. She replied sharply,—

"She must work, for she eats. I don't support her to do nothing."

"What is it she is making?" said the stranger, in that gentle voice which contrasted so strangely with his beggar's clothes and his porter's shoulders.

The Thénardiess deigned to answer.

"Stockings, if you please. Stockings for my little girls, who have none worth speaking of, and will soon be going barefooted."

The man looked at Cosette's poor red feet, and continued,—

"When will she finish that pair of stockings?"

"It will take her at least three or four good days, the lazy thing."

"And how much might this pair of stockings be worth, when it is finished?"

The Thénardiess cast a disdainful glance at him.

"At least thirty sous."

"Would you take five francs for them?" said the man.

"Goodness!" exclaimed a waggoner who was listening, with a horse-laugh, "five francs? It's a humbug! five bullets!"

Thénardier now thought it time to speak.

"Yes, Monsieur, if it is your fancy, you can have that pair of stockings for five francs. We can't refuse anything to travellers."

"You must pay for them now," said the Thénardiess, in her short and peremptory way.

"I will buy that pair of stockings," answered the man, "and," added he, drawing a five-franc piece from his pocket and laying it on the table, "I will pay for them."

Then he turned towards Cosette.

"Now your work belongs to me. Play, my child."

The waggoner was so affected by the five-franc piece, that he left his glass and went to look at it.

"It's so, that's a fact!" cried he, as he looked at it. "A regular hind-wheel! and no counterfeit!"

Thénardier approached, and silently put the piece in his pocket.

The Thénardiess has nothing to reply. She bit her lips, and her face assumed an expression of hatred.

Meanwhile Cosette trembled. She ventured to ask,—

"Madame, is it true? can I play?"

"Play!" said the Thénardiess, in a terrible voice.

"Thank you, Madame," said Cosette. And, while her mouth thanked the Thénardiess, all her little soul was thanking the traveller.

Thénardier returned to his drink. His wife whispered in his ear,—

"What can that yellow man be?"

"I have seen," answered Thénardier, in a commanding tone, "millionnaires with coats like that."

Cosette had left her knitting, but she had not moved from her place. Cosette always stirred as little as was possible. She had taken from a little box behind her a few old rags, and her little lead sword.

Eponine and Azelma paid no attention to what was going on. They had just performed a very important operation ;

they had caught the kitten. They had thrown the doll on the floor, and Eponine, the elder, was dressing the kitten in spite of her miaulings and contortions, with a lot of clothes and red and blue rags. While she was engaged in this serious and difficult labour, she was talking to her sister in that sweet and charming language of children, the grace of which, like the splendour of the butterfly's wing, escapes when we try to preserve it.

"Look! look, sister, this doll is more amusing than the other. She moves, she cries, she is warm. Come, sister let us play with her. She shall be my little girl; I will be a lady. I'll come to see you, and you must look at her. By-and-by you must see her whiskers, and you must be surprised. And then you must see her ears, and then you must see her tail, and that will astonish you. And you must say to me, 'Oh! my stars!' and I will say to you, 'Yes, Madame, it is a little girl that I have like that.' Little girls are like that now."

Azelma listened to Eponine with wonder.

Meanwhile, the drinkers were singing an obscene song, at which they laughed enough to shake the room. Thénardier encouraged and accompanied them.

As birds make a nest of anything, children make a doll of no matter what. While Eponine and Azelma were dressing up the cat, Cosette, for her part, had dressed up the sword. That done, she had laid it upon her arm, and was singing it softly to sleep.

The doll is one of the most imperious necessities, and at the same time one of the most charming instincts, of female childhood. To care for, to clothe, to adorn, to dress, to undress, to dress over again, to teach, to scold a little, to rock, to cuddle, to put to sleep, to imagine that something is somebody—all the future of woman is there. Even while musing and prattling, while making little wardrobes and little baby-clothes, while sewing little dresses, little bodices,

and little jackets, the child becomes a little girl, the little girl becomes a great girl, the great girl becomes a woman. The first baby takes the place of the last doll.

A little girl without a doll is almost as unfortunate and quite as impossible as a woman without children.

Cosette had therefore made a doll of her sword.

The Thénardiess, on her part, approached the *yellow man*. "My husband is right," thought she; "it may be Monsieur Laffitte. Some rich men are so odd."

She came and rested her elbow on the table at which he was sitting.

"Monsieur," said she——

At this word *Monsieur* the man turned. The Thénardiess had called him before only *brave man* or *good man*.

"You see, Monsieur," she pursued, putting on her sweetest look, which was still more unendurable than her ferocious manner, "I am very willing the child should play; I am not opposed to it; it is well for once, because you are generous. But, you see, she is poor; she must work."

"The child is not yours, then?" asked the man.

"Oh dear no, Monsieur! It is a little pauper that we have taken in through charity. A sort of imbecile child. She must have water on her brain. Her head is big, as you see. We do all we can for her, but we are not rich. We write in vain to her country; for six months we have had no answer. We think that her mother must be dead."

"Ah!" said the man; and he fell back into his reverie.

"This mother was no great things," added the Thénardiess. "She abandoned her child."

During all this conversation Cosette, as if an instinct had warned her that they were talking about her, had not taken her eyes from the Thénardiess. She listened. She heard a few words here and there.

Meanwhile the drinkers, all three-quarters drunk, were repeating their foul chorus with redoubled gaiety. It was highly spiced with jests, in which the names of the Virgin and the child Jesus were often heard. The Thénardiess had gone to take her part in the hilarity. Cosette, under the table, was looking into the fire, which was reflected from her fixed eye; she was again rocking the sort of rag baby that she had made, and as she rocked it, she sang in a low voice, "My mother is dead! my mother is dead! my mother is dead!"

At the repeated entreaties of the hostess, the yellow man, "the millionaire," finally consented to sup.

"What will Monsieur have?"

"Some bread and cheese," said the man.

"Decidedly, it is a beggar," thought the Thénardiess.

The revellers continued to sing their songs, and the child, under the table, also sang hers.

All at once Cosette stopped. She had just turned and seen the little Thénardiess' doll, which they had forsaken for the cat and left on the floor, a few steps from the kitchen table.

Then she let the bundled-up sword, that only half satisfied her, fall, and ran her eyes slowly round the room. The Thénardiess was whispering to her husband and counting some money, Eponine and Azelma were playing with the cat, the travellers were eating or drinking or singing, nobody was looking at her. She had not a moment to lose. She crept out from under the table on her hands and knees, made sure once more that nobody was watching her, then darted quickly to the doll, and seized it. An instant afterwards she was at her place, seated, motionless, only turned in such a way as to keep the doll that she held in her arms in the shadow. The happiness of playing with a doll was so rare to her that it had all the violence of rapture.

Nobody had seen her, except the traveller, who was slowly eating his meagre supper.

This joy lasted for nearly a quarter of an hour.

But in spite of Cosette's precautions, she did not perceive that one of the doll's feet *stuck out*, and that the fire of the fireplace lighted it up very vividly. This rosy and luminous foot which protruded from the shadow suddenly caught Azelma's eye, and she said to Eponine, "Oh ! sister !"

The two little girls stopped, stupefied ; Cosette had dared to take the doll.

Eponine got up, and without letting go of the cat, went to her mother and began to pull at her skirt.

"Let me alone," said the mother ; "what do you want?"

"Mother," said the child, "look there."

And she pointed at Cosette.

Cosette, wholly absorbed in the ecstasy of her possession, saw and heard nothing else.

The face of the Thénardiess assumed the peculiar expression which is composed of the terrible mingled with the commonplace, and which has given this class of women the name of furies.

This time wounded pride exasperated her anger still more. Cosette had leaped over all barriers. Cosette had laid her hands upon the doll of "those young ladies." A czarina who had seen a mugick trying on the grand cordon of her imperial son would have had the same expression.

She cried with a voice harsh with indignation,—

"Cosette!"

Cosette shuddered as if the earth had quaked beneath her. She turned round.

"Cosette!" repeated the Thénardiess.

Cosette took the doll and placed it gently on the floor with a kind of veneration mingled with despair. Then,

without taking away her eyes, she joined her hands, and, what is frightful to tell in a child of that age, she wrung them; then, what none of the emotions of the day had drawn from her, neither the run in the wood, nor the weight of the bucket of water, nor the loss of the money, nor the sight of the cowhide, nor even the stern words she had heard from the Thénardiess, she burst into tears. She sobbed.

Meanwhile the traveller arose.

"What is the matter?" said he to the Thénardiess.

"Don't you see?" said the Thénardiess, pointing with her finger to the *corpus delicti* lying at Cosette's feet.

"Well, what is that?" said the man.

"That beggar," answered the Thénardiess, "has dared to touch the children's doll."

"All this noise about that?" said the man. "Well, what if she did play with that doll?"

"She has touched it with her dirty hands!" continued the Thénardiess, "with her horrid hands!"

Here Cosette redoubled her sobs.

"Be still!" cried the Thénardiess.

The man walked straight to the street door, opened it, and went out.

As soon as he had gone, the Thénardiess profited by his absence to give Cosette under the table a severe kick, which made the child shriek.

The door opened again, and the man reappeared, holding in his hands the fabulous doll of which we have spoken, and which had been the admiration of all the youngsters of the village since morning; he stood it up before Cosette, saying,—

"Here, this is for you."

It is probable that during the time he had been there—more than an hour—in the midst of his reverie, he had caught confused glimpses of this toy-shop, lighted up with

lamps and candles so splendidly that it shone through the bar-room window like an illumination.

Cosette raised her eyes; she saw the man approach her with that doll as she would have seen the sun approach, she heard those astounding words, *This is for you*. She looked at him, she looked at the doll, then she drew back slowly, and went and hid as far as she could under the table in the corner of the room.

She wept no more, she cried no more, she had the appearance of no longer daring to breathe.

The Thénardiess, Eponine, and Azelma were so many statues. Even the drinkers stopped. There was a solemn silence in the whole bar-room.

The Thénardiess, petrified and mute, recommenced her conjectures anew: "What is this old fellow? is he a pauper? is he a millionaire? Perhaps he's both, that is a robber.

The face of the husband Thénardier presented that expressive wrinkle which marks the human countenance whenever the dominant instinct appears in it with all its brutal power. The innkeeper contemplated by turns the doll and the traveller; he seemed to be scenting this man as he would have scented a bag of money. This only lasted for a moment. He approached his wife and whispered to her,—

"That machine cost at least thirty francs. No nonsense. Down on your knees before the man!"

Coarse natures have this in common with artless natures, that they have no transitions.

"Well, Cosette," said the Thénardiess, in a voice which was meant to be sweet, and which was entirely composed of the sour honey of vicious women, "ain't you going to take your doll?"

Cosette ventured to come out of her hole.

"My little Cosette," said Thénardier, with a caressing

air, "Monsieur gives you a doll. Take it. It is yours."

Cosette looked upon the wonderful doll with a sort of terror. Her face was still flooded with tears, but her eyes began to fill, like the sky in the breaking of the dawn, with strange radiations of joy. What she experienced at that moment was almost like what she would have felt if some one had said to her suddenly, "Little girl, you are Queen of France."

It seemed to her that if she touched that doll, thunder would spring forth from it.

Which was true to some extent, for she thought that the Thénardiess would scold and beat her.

However, the attraction overcame her. She finally approached, and timidly murmured, turning towards the Thénardiess,—

"Can I, Madame?"

No expression can describe her look, at once full of despair, dismay, and transport.

"Good Lord!" said the Thénardiess, "it is yours. Since Monsieur gives it to you."

"Is it true, is it true, Monsieur?" said Cosette; "is the lady for me?"

The stranger appeared to have his eyes full of tears. He seemed to be at that stage of emotion in which one does not speak for fear of weeping. He nodded assent to Cosette, and put the hand of "the lady" in her little hand.

Cosette withdrew her hand hastily, as if that of *the lady* burned her, and looked down at the floor. We are compelled to add, that at that instant she thrust out her tongue enormously. All at once she turned and seized the doll eagerly.

"I will call her Catharine," said she.

It was a strange moment when Cosette's rags met and

pressed against the ribbons and the fresh pink muslins of the doll.

"Madame," said she, "may I put her in a chair?"

"Yes, my child," answered the Thénardiess.

It was Eponine and Azelma now who looked upon Cosette with envy.

Cosette placed Catharine on a chair, then sat down on the floor before her, and remained motionless, without saying a word, in the attitude of contemplation.

"Why don't you play, Cosette?" said the stranger.

"Oh! I am playing," answered the child.

This stranger, this unknown man, who seemed like a visit from Providence to Cosette, was at that moment the being which the Thénardiess hated more than aught else in the world. However, she was compelled to restrain herself. Her emotions were more than she could endure, accustomed as she was to dissimulation, by endeavouring to copy her husband in all her actions. She sent her daughters to bed immediately, then asked the yellow man's *permission* to send Cosette to bed—"who is very tired to-day," added she, with a motherly air. Cosette went to bed, holding Catharine in her arms.

The Thénardiess went from time to time to the other end of the room, where her husband was, "*to soothe her soul*," she said. She exchanged a few words with him, which were the more furious that she did not dare to speak them aloud,—

"The old fool! what has he got into his head to come here to disturb us! to want that little monster to play! to give her dolls! to give forty-franc dolls to a slut that I wouldn't give forty sous for. A little more, and he would say your Majesty to her, as they do to the Duchess of Berry! Is he in his senses? He must be crazy, the strange old fellow!"

"Why? It is very simple," replied Thénardier. "If

it amuses him ! It amuses you for the girl to work ; it amuses him for her to play. He has the right to do it. A traveller can do as he likes if he pays for it. If this old fellow is a philanthropist, what is that to you ? If he is crazy, it don't concern you. What do you interfere for, as long as he has money ?”

Language of a master, and reasoning of an innkeeper, which neither in one case nor the other admits of reply.

The man had leaned his elbows on the table, and resumed his attitude of reverie. All the other travellers, pedlars, and waggoners, had drawn back a little, and sung no more. They looked upon him from a distance, with a sort of respectful fear. This solitary man, so poorly clad, who took five-franc pieces from his pocket with so much indifference, and who lavished gigantic dolls on little brats in wooden shoes, was certainly a magnificent and formidable Goodman.

Several hours passed away. The midnight mass was said, the revel was finished, the drinkers had gone, the house was closed, the room was deserted, the fire had gone out, the stranger still remained in the same place and in the same posture. From time to time he changed the elbow on which he rested. That was all. But he had not spoken a word since Cosette was gone.

The Thénardiens alone, out of propriety and curiosity, had remained in the room.

“Is he going to spend the night like this ?” grumbled the Thénardiess. When the clock struck two in the morning, she acknowledged herself beaten, and said to her husband, “I am going to bed, you may do as you like.” The husband sat down at a table in a corner, lighted a candle, and began to read the *Courrier Français*.

A good hour passed thus. The worthy innkeeper had

read the *Courrier Français* at least three times, from the date of the number to the name of the printer. The stranger did not stir.

Thénardier moved, coughed, spit, blew his nose, and creaked his chair. The man did not stir. "Is he asleep?" thought Thénardier. The man was not asleep, but nothing could arouse him.

Finally, Thénardier took off his cap, approached softly, and ventured to say,—

"Is Monsieur not going to repose?"

Not going to bed would have seemed to him too much and too familiar. To *repose* implied luxury, and there was respect in it. Such words have the mysterious and wonderful property of swelling the bill in the morning. A room in which you *go to bed* costs twenty sous; a room in which you *repose* costs twenty francs.

"Yes," said the stranger, "**you** are right. Where is your stable?"

"Monsieur," said Thénardier, with a smile, "I will conduct Monsieur."

He took the candle, the man took his bundle and his staff, and Thénardier led him into a room on the first floor, which was very showy, furnished all in mahogany, with a high-post bedstead and red calico curtains.

"What is this?" said the traveller.

"It is properly our bridal chamber," said the innkeeper. "We occupy another like this, my spouse and I; this is not open more than three or four times in a year."

"I should have liked the stable as well," said the man, bluntly.

Thénardier did not appear to hear this not very civil answer.

He lighted two entirely new wax-candles which were displayed upon the mantel; a good fire was blazing in the fireplace. There was on the mantel, under a glass case,

a woman's head-dress of silver thread and orange flowers.

"What is this?" said the stranger.

"Monsieur," said Thénardier, "it is my wife's bridal cap."

The traveller looked at the object with a look which seemed to say, "There ~~was~~ a moment, then, when this monster was a virgin."

Thénardier lied, however. When he hired this shanty to turn it into a chop-house, he found the room thus furnished, and bought this furniture, and purchased at second-hand these orange-flowers, thinking that this would cast a gracious light over "his spouse," and that the house would derive from them what the English call respectability.

When the traveller turned again the host had disappeared. Thénardier had discreetly taken himself out of the way without daring to say good night, not desiring to treat with a disrespectful cordiality a ~~man whom~~ he proposed to skin royally in the morning.

The innkeeper retired to his room; his wife was in bed, but not asleep. When she heard her husband's step, she turned towards him, and said,—

"You know that I am going to kick Cosette out doors to-morrow!"

Thénardier coolly answered,—

"You are, indeed!"

They exchanged no further words, and in a few moments their candle was blown out.

For his part, the traveller had put his staff and bundle in a corner. The host gone, he sat down in an arm-chair, and remained some time thinking. Then he drew off his shoes, took one of the two candles, blew out the other, pushed open the door, and went out of the room, looking about him as if he were searching for something. He

passed through a hall, and came to the stairway. There he heard a very soft little sound, which resembled the breathing of a child. Guided by this sound, he came to a sort of triangular nook built under the stairs, or, rather, formed by the staircase itself. This hole was nothing but the space beneath the stairs. There, among all sorts of old baskets and old rubbish, in the dust and among the cobwebs, there was a bed—if a mattress, so full of holes as to show the straw, and a covering so full of holes as to show the mattress, can be called a bed. There were no sheets. This was placed on the floor immediately on the tiles. In this bed Cosette was sleeping.

The man approached and looked at her.

Cosette was sleeping soundly ; she was dressed. In the winter she did not undress on account of the cold. She held the doll clasped in her arms ; its large open eyes shone in the obscurity. From time to time she heaved a deep sigh, as if she were about to wake, and she hugged the doll almost convulsively. There was only one of her wooden shoes at the side of her bed. An open door near Cosette's nook disclosed a large dark room. The stranger entered. At the further end, through a glass window, he perceived two little beds with very white spreads. They were those of Azelma and Eponine. Half hid behind these beds was a willow cradle without curtains, in which the little boy who had cried all the evening was sleeping.

The stranger conjectured that this room communicated with that of the Thénardiens. He was about to withdraw when his eye fell upon the fireplace, one of those huge tavern fireplaces where there is always so little fire, when there is a fire, and which are so cold to look upon. In this one there was no fire ; there were not even any ashes. What there was, however, attracted the traveller's attention. It was two little children's shoes, of coquettish shape and of different sizes. The traveller remembered the graceful and

immemorial custom of children putting their shoes in the fireplace on Christmas night, to wait there in the darkness in expectation of some shining gift from their good fairy. Eponine and Azelma had taken good care not to forget this, and each had put one of her shoes in the fireplace.

The traveller bent over them.

The fairy—that is to say, the mother—had already made her visit, and shining in each shoe was a beautiful new tenuous piece.

The man rose up, and was on the point of going away when he perceived further along, by itself, in the darkest corner of the fireplace, another object. He looked, and recognized a shoe, a horrid wooden shoe of the clumsiest sort, half broken, and covered with ashes and dried mud. It was Cosette's shoe. Cosette, with that touching confidence of childhood which can always be deceived without ever being discouraged, had also placed her shoe in the fireplace.

What a sublime and sweet thing is hope in a child who has never known anything but despair!

There was nothing in this wooden shoe.

The stranger fumbled in his waistcoat, bent over, and dropped into Cosette's shoe a gold louis.

Then he went back to his room with stealthy tread.

IX.

ON the following morning, at least two hours before day, Thénardier, seated at a table in the bar-room, a candle by his side, with pen in hand, was making out the bill of the traveller in the yellow coat.

His wife was standing half bent over him, following him with her eyes. Not a word passed between them. It was, on one side, a profound meditation; on the other, that

religious admiration with which we observe a marvel of the human mind spring up and expand. A noise was heard in the house; it was the Lark, sweeping the stairs.

After a good quarter of an hour, and some erasures Thénardier produced this masterpiece :—

Bill of Monsieur in No. 1.

Supper.....	3 frs.
Room	10 „
Candle	5 „
Fire	4 „
Service.....	1 „
<hr/>	
Total.....	23 frs.

Service was written *servisse*.

“Twenty-three francs!” exclaimed the woman, with an enthusiasm which was mingled with some hesitation.

Like all great artists, Thénardier was not satisfied.

“Pooh!” said he.

It was the accent of Castlereagh drawing up for the Congress of Vienna the bill which France was to pay.

“Monsieur Thénardier, you are right, he deserves it,” murmured the woman, thinking of the doll given to Cosette in the presence of her daughters; “it is right! but it’s too much. He won’t pay it.”

Thénardier put on his cold laugh, and said,—

“He will pay it.”

This laugh was the highest sign of certainty and authority. What was thus said must be. The woman did not insist. She began to arrange the tables; the husband walked back and forth in the room. A moment after he added,—

“I owe, at least, fifteen hundred francs!”

He seated himself thoughtfully in the chimney-corner his feet in the warm ashes.

“Ah, ha!” replied the woman, “you don’t forget that I kick Cosette out of the house to-day? The monster! tears my vitals to see her with her doll! I would re

marry Louis XVIII. than keep her in the house another day !”

Thénardier lighted his pipe, and answered between two puffs,—

“ You’ll give the bill to the man.”

Then he went out.

He was scarcely out of the room when the traveller came in.

Thénardier reappeared immediately behind him, and remained motionless in the half-open door, visible only to his wife.

The yellow man carried his staff and bundle in his hand.

“ Up so soon !” said the Thénardiess ; “ is Monsieur going to leave us already ?”

While speaking, she turned the bill in her hands with an embarrassed look, and made creases in it with her nails. Her hard face exhibited a shade of timidity and doubt that was not habitual.

To present such a bill to a man who had so perfectly the appearance of “ a pauper ” seemed too awkward to her.

The traveller appeared preoccupied and absent-minded.

He answered,—

“ Yes, Madame, I am going away.”

“ Monsieur, then, had no business at Montfermeil ?” replied she.

“ No, I am passing through ; that is all. Madame,” added he, “ what do I owe ?”

The Thénardiess, without answering, handed him the folded bill.

The man unfolded the paper and looked at it ; but his thoughts were evidently elsewhere.

“ Madame,” replied he, “ do you do a good business in Montfermeil ?”

“ So-so, Monsieur,” answered the Thénardiess, stupefied at seeing no other explosion.

She continued in a mournful and lamenting strain,—

“Oh! Monsieur, the times are very hard, and then we have so few rich people around here! It is a very little place, you see. If we only had rich travellers now and then, like Monsieur! We have so many expenses! Why, that little girl eats us out of house and home.”

“What little girl?”

“Why, the little girl you know! Cosette! the Lark, as they call her about here!”

“Ah!” said the man.

She continued,—

“How stupid these peasants are with their nicknames! She looks more like a bat than a lark. You see, Monsieur, we don’t ask charity, but we are not able to give it. We make nothing, and have a great deal to pay. The license, the excise, the doors and windows, the tax on everything! Monsieur knows that the Government demands a deal of money. And then I have my own girls. I have nothing to spend on other people’s children.”

The man replied in a voice which he endeavoured to render indifferent, and in which there was a slight tremulousness,—

“Suppose you were relieved of her?”

“Who? Cosette?”

“Yes.”

The red and violent face of the woman became illumined with a hideous expression.

“Ah, Monsieur! my good Monsieur! take her, keep her, take her away, carry her off, sugar her, stuff her, drink her, eat her, and be blessed by the holy Virgin and all the saints in Paradise!”

“Agreed.”

“Really! you will take her away?”

“I will.”

“Immediately?”

"Immediately. Call the child."

"Cosette!" cried the Thénardiess.

"In the meantime," continued the man, "I will pay my bill. How much is it?"

He cast a glance at the bill, and could not repress a movement of surprise.

"Twenty-three francs?"

He looked at the hostess and repeated,—

"Twenty-three francs?"

There was, in the pronunciation of these two sentences, thus repeated, the accent which lies between the point of exclamation and the point of interrogation.

The Thénardiess had had time to prepare herself for the shock. She replied with assurance,—

"Yes, of course, Monsieur! it is twenty-three francs."

The stranger placed five five franc pieces upon the table.

"Go for the little girl," said he.

At this moment Thénardier advanced into the middle of the room and said,—

"Monsieur owes twenty-six sous."

"Twenty-six sous!" exclaimed the woman.

"Twenty sous for the room," continued Thénardier, coldly, "and six for supper. As to the little girl, I must have some talk with Monsieur about that. Leave us, wife."

The Thénardiess was dazzled by one of those unexpected flashes which emanate from talent. She felt that the great actor had entered upon the scene, answered not a word, and went out.

As soon as they were alone, Thénardier offered the traveller a chair. The traveller sat down, but Thénardier remained standing, and his face assumed a singular expression of good-nature and simplicity.

‘Monsieur,’ said he, “listen, I must say that I adore this child.”

The stranger looked at him steadily.

“What child?”

Thénardier continued,—

“How strangely we become attached! Take back your money. This child I adore.”

“Who is that?” asked the stranger.

“Oh, our little Cosette! And you wish to take her away from us? Indeed, I speak frankly, as true as you are an honourable man, I cannot consent to it. I should miss her. I have had her since she was very small. It is true, she costs us money; it is true she has her faults; it is true we are not rich; it is true I paid four hundred francs for medicines at one time when she was sick. But we must do something for God. She has neither father nor mother; I have brought her up. I have bread enough for her and for myself. In fact, I must keep this child. You understand, we have affections; I am a good beast myself; I do not reason; I love this little girl; my wife is hasty, but she loves her also. You see, she is like our own child. I feel the need of her prattle in the house.”

The stranger was looking steadily at him all the while. He continued,—

“Pardon me, excuse me, Monsieur, but one does not give his child like that to a traveller. Isn’t it true that I am right? After that, I don’t say—you are rich, and have the appearance of a very fine man—if it is for her advantage, but I must know about it. You understand? On the supposition that I should let her go and sacrifice my own feelings, I should want to know where she is going. I would not want to lose sight of her, I should want to know who she was with, that I might come and see her now and then, and that she might know that her good

foster-father was still watching over her. Finally, there are things which are not possible. I do not know even your name. If you should take her away, I should say, Alas for the little Lark, where has she gone? I must, at least, see some poor rag of paper, a bit of a passport—something.”

The stranger, without removing from him this gaze which went, so to speak, to the bottom of his conscience, answered in a severe and firm tone,—

“Monsieur Thénardier, people do not take a passport to come five leagues from Paris. If I take Cosette, I take her, that is all. You will not know my name, you will not know my abode, you will not know where she goes, and my intention is that she shall never see you again in her life. Do you agree to that? Yes or no?”

As demons and genii recognize by certain signs the presence of a superior god, Thénardier comprehended that he had to deal with one who was very powerful. It came like an intuition; he understood it with his clear and quick sagacity; although during the evening he had been drinking with the waggons, smoking, and singing bawdy songs, still he was observing the stranger all the while, watching him like a cat, and studying him like a mathematician. He had been observing him on his own account, for pleasure and by instinct, and at the same time lying in wait as if he had been paid for it. Not a gesture, not a movement of the man in the yellow coat had escaped him. Before even the stranger had so clearly shown his interest in Cosette, Thénardier had divined it. He had surprised the searching glances of the old man constantly returning to the child. Why this interest? What was this man? Why, with so much money in his purse, this miserable dress? These were questions which he put to himself without being able to answer them, and they irritated him. He had been thinking it over all night. This could not be the Cosette's father,

Was it a grandfather? Then why did he not make himself known at once? When a man has a right, he shows it. This man evidently had no right to Cosette. Then who was he? Thénardier was lost in conjectures. He caught glimpses of everything, but saw nothing. However it might be, when he commenced the conversation with this man, sure that there was a secret in all this, sure that the man had an interest in remaining unknown, he felt himself strong; at the stranger's clear and firm answer, when he saw that this mysterious personage was mysterious and nothing more, he felt weak. He was expecting nothing of the kind. His conjectures were put to flight. He rallied his ideas. He weighed all in a second. Thénardier was one of those men who comprehend a situation at a glance. He decided that this was the moment to advance straight-forward and swiftly. He did what great captains do at that decisive instant which they alone can recognize; he unmasked his battery at once.

"Monsieur," said he, "I must have fifteen hundred francs."

The stranger took from his side-pocket an old black leather pocket-book, opened it, and drew forth three bank bills, which he placed upon the table. He then rested his large thumb on these bills, and said to the tavern-keeper,—

"Bring Cosette."

While this was going on what was Cosette doing?

Cosette, as soon as she awoke, had run to her wooden shoe. She had found the gold piece in it. It was not a napoleon, but one of those new twenty-franc pieces of the Restoration, on the face of which the little Prussian queue had replaced the laurel crown. Cosette was dazzled. Her destiny began to intoxicate her. She did not know that it was a piece of gold; she had never seen one before; she hastily concealed it in her pocket as if she had stolen it. Never-

theless she felt it boded good to her. She divined whence the gift came, but she experienced a joy that was filled with awe. She was gratified ; she was, moreover, stupefied. Such magnificent and beautiful things seemed unreal to her. The doll made her afraid, the gold piece made her afraid. She trembled with wonder before these magnificences. The stranger himself did not make her afraid. On the contrary, he reassured her. Since the previous evening, amid all her astonishment, and in her sleep, she was thinking in her little child's mind of this man who had such an old, and poor, and sad appearance, and who was so rich and so kind. Since she had met this good man in the wood it seemed as though all things were changed about her. Cosette, less happy than the smallest swallow of the sky, had never known what it is to take refuge under a mother's wing. For five years, that is to say, as far back as she could remember, the poor child had shivered and shuddered. She had always been naked under the biting north wind of misfortune, and now it seemed to her that she was clothed. Before her soul was cold, now it was warm. Cosette was no longer afraid of the Thénardiens ; she was no longer alone ; she had somebody to look to.

She hurriedly set herself to her morning task. This louis, which she had placed in the same pocket of her apron from which the fifteen-sous piece had fallen the night before, distracted her attention from her work. She did not dare to touch it, but she spent five minutes at a time contemplating it, and, we must confess, with her tongue thrust out. While sweeping the stairs, she stopped and stood there, motionless, forgetting her broom, and the whole world besides, occupied in looking at this shining star at the bottom of her pocket.

It was in one of these reveries that the Thénardiess found her.

At the command of her husband, she had gone to look

for her. Wonderful to tell, she did not give her a slap nor even call her a hard name.

"Cosette," said she, almost gently, "come quick."

An instant after, Cosette entered the bar-room.

The stranger took the bundle he had brought and untied it. This bundle contained a little woollen frock, an apron, a coarse cotton under-garment, a petticoat, a scarf, woollen stockings, and shoes—a complete dress for a girl of seven years. It was all in black.

"My child," said the man, "take this and go and dress yourself quick."

The day was breaking when those of the inhabitants of Montfermeil who were beginning to open their doors, saw pass on the road to Paris a poorly clad goodman leading a little girl dressed in mourning, who had a pink doll in her arms. They were going towards Livry.

It was the stranger and Cosette.

No one recognized the man ; as Cosette was not now in tatters, few recognized her.

Cosette was going away. With whom? She was ignorant. Where? She knew not. All she understood was that she was leaving behind the Thénardier chop-house. Nobody had thought of bidding her good-bye, nor had she of bidding good-bye to anybody. She went out from that house hated and hating.

Poor, gentle being, whose heart had only been crushed hitherto !

Cosette walked seriously along, opening her large eyes, and looking at the sky. She had put her louis in the pocket of her new apron. From time to time she bent over and cast a glance at it, and then looked at the goodman. She felt somewhat as if she were near God.

X.

THE Thénardiess, according to her custom, had left her husband alone. She was expecting great events. When the man and Cosette were gone, Thénardier, after a good quarter of an hour, took her aside and showed her the fifteen hundred francs.

"What's that?" said she.

It was the first time, since the beginning of their house-keeping, that she had dared to criticise the act of her master.

He felt the blow.

"True, you are right," said he; "I am a fool. Give me my hat."

He folded the three bank bills, thrust them into his pocket, and started in all haste, but he missed the direction and took the road to the right. Some neighbours of whom he inquired put him on the track; the Lark and the man had been seen to go in the direction of Livry. He followed this indication, walking rapidly and talking to himself.

"This man is evidently a millionaire, dressed in yellow, and as for me, I am a brute. He first gave twenty sous, then five francs, then fifty francs, then fifteen hundred francs—all so readily. He would have given fifteen thousand francs. But I shall catch him."

And then this bundle of clothes, made ready beforehand for the little girl—all that was strange; there was a good deal of mystery under it. When one gets hold of a mystery, he does not let go of it. The secrets of the rich are sponges full of gold; a man ought to know how to squeeze them. All these thoughts were whirling in his brain. "I am a brute," said he.

On leaving Montfermeil and reaching the turn made by

the road to Livry, the route may be seen for a long distance on the plateau. On reaching this point he counted on being able to see the man and the little girl. He looked as far as his eye could reach, but saw nothing. He inquired again. In the meanwhile he was losing time. The passers-by told him that the man and child whom he sought had travelled towards the wood in the direction of Gagny. He hastened in this direction.

They had the start of him, but a child walks slowly, and he went rapidly. And then the country was well known to him.

Suddenly he stopped and struck his forehead like a man who has forgotten the main thing, and who thinks of re-tracing his steps.

"I ought to have taken my gun!" said he.

Thénardier was one of those double natures who sometimes appear among us without our knowledge, and disappear without ever being known, because destiny has shown us but one side of them. It is the fate of many men to live thus half submerged. In a quiet, ordinary situation, Thénardier had all that is necessary to make—we do not say to be—what passes for an honest tradesman, a good citizen. At the same time, under certain circumstances, under the operation of certain occurrences exciting his baser nature, he had in him all that was necessary to be a villain. He was a shopkeeper, in which lay hidden a monster. Satan ought for a moment to have squatted in some corner of the hole in which Thénardier lived, and studied this hideous masterpiece.

After hesitating an instant,—

"Bah!" thought he, "they would have time to escape!"

And he continued on his way, going rapidly forward, and almost as if he were certain, with the sagacity of the fox scenting a flock of partridges.

In fact, when he had passed the ponds, and crossed

obliquely the large meadow at the right of the Avenue de Bellevue, as he reached the grassy path which nearly encircles the hill, and which covers the arch of the old aqueduct of the Abbey of Chelles, he perceived above a bush the hat on which he had already built so many conjectures. It was the man's hat. The bushes were low. Thénardier perceived that the man and Cosette were seated there. The child could not be seen, she was so short, but he could see the head of the doll.

Thénardier was not deceived. The man had sat down there to give Cosette a little rest. The chop-house-keeper turned aside the bushes, and suddenly appeared before the eyes of those whom he sought.

"Pardon me, excuse me, Monsieur," said he, all out of breath; "but here are your fifteen hundred francs."

So saying, he held out the three bank bills to the stranger.

The man raised his eyes.

"What does that mean?"

Thénardier answered respectfully,—

"Monsieur, that means that I take back Cosette."

Cosette shuddered, and hugged close to the good-man.

He answered, looking Thénardier straight in the eye, and spacing his syllables.

"You—take—back—Cosette?"

"Yes, Monsieur, I take her back. I tell you I have reflected. Indeed, I haven't the right to give her to you. I am an honest man, you see. This little girl is not mine; she belongs to her mother. Her mother has confided her to me; I can only give her up to her mother. You will tell me, 'But her mother is dead.' Well, in that case, I can only give up the child to a person who shall bring me a written order, signed by the mother, stating I should deliver the child to him. That is clear."

The man, without answering, felt in his pocket, and

Thénardier saw the pocket-book containing the bank bills reappear.

The tavern-keeper felt a thrill of joy.

"Good!" thought he; "hold on. He is going to corrupt me!"

Before opening the pocket-book, the traveller cast a look about him. The place was entirely deserted. There was not a soul either in the wood or in the valley. The man opened the pocket-book, and drew from it, not the handful of bank bills which Thénardier expected, but a little piece of paper, which he unfolded and presented open to the innkeeper, saying,—

"You are right. Read that!"

Thénardier took the paper and read,—

"M—— sur M——, March 25, 1823.

"Monsieur Thénardier,

"You will deliver Cosette to the bearer. He will settle all small debts.

"I have the honour to salute you with consideration.

"FANTINE."

"You know that signature?" replied the man.

It was indeed the signature of Fantine. Thénardier recognized it.

There was nothing to say. He felt doubly enraged, enraged at being compelled to give up the bribe which he hoped for, and enraged at being beaten. The man added,—

"You can keep this paper as your receipt."

Thénardier retreated in good order.

"This signature is very well imitated," he grumbled, between his teeth. "Well, so be it!"

Then he made a desperate effort.

"Monsieur," said he, "it is all right. Then you are the

person. But you must settle 'all small debts.' There is a large amount due to me."

The man rose to his feet and said, at the same time snapping with his thumb and finger some dust from his threadbare sleeve,—

"Monsieur Thénardier, in January the mother reckoned that she owed you a hundred and twenty francs; you sent her in February a memorandum of five hundred francs; you received three hundred francs at the end of February, and three hundred at the beginning of March. There has since elapsed nine months, which, at fifteen francs per month, the price agreed upon, amounts to a hundred and thirty-five francs. You had received a hundred francs in advance. There remain thirty-five francs due you. I have just given you fifteen hundred francs."

Thénardier felt what the wolf feels the moment when he finds himself seized and crushed by the steel jaws of the trap.

"What is this devil of a man?" thought he

He did what the wolf does, he gave a spring. Audacity had succeeded with him once already.

"Monsieur—I—don't—know—your—name," said he, resolutely, and putting aside this time all show of respect. "I shall take back Cosette, or you must give me a thousand crowns."

The stranger said quietly,—

"Come, Cosette."

He took Cosette with his left hand, and with the right picked up his staff, which was on the ground.

Thénardier noted the enormous size of the cudgel, and the solitude of the place.

The man disappeared in the wood with the child, leaving the chop-house-keeper motionless and nonplussed.

As they walked away, Thénardier observed his broad shoulders, a little rounded, and his big fists.

Then his eyes fell back upon his own puny arms and thin hands. "I must have been a fool indeed," thought he, "not to have brought my gun, as I was going on a hunt."

However, the innkeeper did not abandon the pursuit.

"I must know where he goes," said he; and he began to follow them at a distance. There remained two things in his possession, one a bitter mockery, the piece of paper signed *Fantine*, and the other a consolation, the fifteen hundred francs.

The man was leading Cosette in the direction of Livry and Bondy. He was walking slowly, his head bent down, in an attitude of reflection and sadness. The winter had bereft the wood of foliage, so that Thénardier did not lose sight of them, though remaining at a considerable distance behind. From time to time the man turned, and looked to see if he were followed. Suddenly he perceived Thénardier. He at once entered a coppice with Cosette, and both disappeared from sight. "The devil!" said Thénardier. And he redoubled his pace.

The density of the thicket compelled him to approach them. When the man reached the thickest part of the wood he turned again. Thénardier had endeavoured to conceal himself in the branches in vain, he could not prevent the man from seeing him. The man cast an uneasy glance at him, then shook his head, and resumed his journey. The innkeeper again took up the pursuit. They walked thus two or three hundred paces. Suddenly the man turned again. He perceived the innkeeper. This time he looked at him so forbiddingly that Thénardier judged it "unprofitable" to go further. Thénardier went home.

XI

JEAN VALJEAN was not dead.

When he fell into the sea, or rather when he threw himself into it, he was, as we have seen, free from his irons. He swam under water to a ship at anchor to which a boat was fastened.

He found means to conceal himself in this boat until evening. At night he betook himself to the water, and reached the land a short distance from Cape Brun.

There, as he did not lack for money, he could procure clothes. A little public-house in the environs of Balaguier was then the place which supplied clothing for escaped convicts—a lucrative business. Then Jean Valjean, like all those joyless fugitives who are endeavouring to throw off the track the spy of the law and social fatality, followed an obscure and wandering path. He found an asylum first in Pradeaux, near Beausset. Then he went towards Grand Villard, near Briançon, in the Hautes Alpes. Groping and restless flight, threading the mazes of the mole whose windings are unknown. There was afterwards found some trace of his passage in Ain, on the territory of Civrieux, in the Pyrenees at Accons, at a place called the Grange-de-Domecq, near the hamlet of Chavailles, and in the environs of Périgueux, at Brunies, a canton of Chapelle Gonaguet. He finally reached Paris. We have seen him at Montfermeil.

His first care, on reaching Paris, had been to purchase a mourning dress for a little girl of seven years, then to procure lodgings. That done, he had gone to Montfermeil.

It will be remembered that, at the time of his former escape, or near that time, he had made a mysterious journey, of which justice had had some glimpse.

Moreover, he was believed to have been dead, and that

thickened the obscurity which surrounded him. At Paris there fell into his hands a paper which chronicled the fact. He felt reassured, and almost as much at peace as if he really had been dead.

On the evening of the same day that Jean Valjean had rescued Cosette from the clutches of the Thénardiess, he entered Paris again. He entered the city at nightfall, with the child, by the Barrière de Monceaux. There he took a cabriolet, which carried him as far as the esplanade of the Observatory. There he got out, paid the driver, took Cosette by the hand, and, both in the darkness of the night, through the deserted streets in the vicinity of L'Ourcine and La Glacière, walked towards the Boulevard de l'Hôpital.

The day had been strange and full of emotion for Cosette ; they had eaten behind hedges bread and cheese bought in isolated chop-houses ; they had often changed carriages, and had travelled short distances on foot. She did not complain ; but she was tired, and Jean Valjean perceived it by her pulling more heavily at his hand while walking. He took her in his arms ; Cosette, without letting go of Catharine, laid her head on Jean Valjean's shoulder, and went to sleep.





Book Third

THE OLD GORBEAU HOUSE.

I.

FORTY years ago, the solitary pedestrian who ventured into the unknown regions of La Salpêtrière and went up along the Boulevard as far as the Barrière d'Italie, reached certain points where it might be said that Paris disappeared. It was no longer a solitude, for there were people passing; it was not the country, for there were houses and streets; it was not a city, the streets had ruts in them, like the highways, and grass grew along their borders; it was not a village, the houses were too lofty. What was it, then? It was an inhabited place where there was nobody, it was a desert place where there was somebody; it was a boulevard of the great city, a street of Paris, wilder, at night, than a forest, and gloomier, by day, than a graveyard.

It was the old quarter of the Horse Market.

Our pedestrian, if he trusted himself beyond the four tumbling walls of this Horse Market, if willing to go even

further than the Rue du Petit Banquier, leaving on his right a court-yard shut in by lofty walls, then a meadow studded with stacks of tan-bark, that looked like the gigantic beaver dams, then an inclosure half-filled with lumber and piles of logs, sawdust, and shavings, from the top of which a huge dog was baying, then a long, low, ruined wall with a small dark-coloured and decrepit gate in it, covered with moss, which was full of flowers in spring-time, then, in the loneliest spot, a frightful broken-down structure on which could be read in large letters, POST NO BILLS; this bold promenader, we say, would reach the corner of the Rue des Vignes-Saint-Marcel, a latitude not much explored. There, near a manufactory and between two garden-walls, could be seen, at the time of which we speak, an old ruined dwelling that, at first sight, seemed as small as a cottage, yet was, in reality, as vast as a cathedral. It stood with its gable end towards the highway, and hence its apparent diminutiveness. Nearly the whole house was hidden. Only the door and one window could be seen.

This old dwelling had but one story.

On examining it, the peculiarity that first struck the beholder was that the door could never have been anything but the door of a hovel, while the window, had it been cut in free-stone and not in rough material, might have been the casement of a lordly residence.

The door was merely a collection of worm-eaten boards rudely tacked together with cross-pieces that looked like pieces of firewood clumsily split out. It opened directly on a steep staircase with high steps covered with mud, plaster, and dust, and of the same breadth as the door, and which seemed from the street to rise perpendicularly like a ladder, and disappear in the shadow between two walls. The top of the shapeless opening which this door closed upon was disguised by a narrow top-screen, in the middle

of which had been sawed a three-cornered orifice that served both for skylight and ventilator when the door was shut. On the inside of the door a brush dipped in ink had, in a couple of strokes of the hand, traced the number 52, and above the screen the same brush had daubed the number 50, so that a new-comer would hesitate, asking, "Where am I?"

The top of the entrance says, "At number 50;" the inside, however, replies, "No! at number 52!" The dust-coloured rags that hung in guise of curtains about the three-cornered ventilator we will not attempt to describe.

The window was broad and of considerable height, with large panes in the sashes and provided with Venetian shutters; only the panes had received a variety of wounds which were at once concealed and made manifest by ingenious strips and bandages of paper, and the shutters were so broken and disjointed that they menaced the passers-by more than they shielded the occupants of the dwelling. The horizontal slats were lacking here and there and had been very simply replaced with boards nailed across, so that what had been a Venetian in the first instance, ended as a regular close shutter. This door with its dirty look, and this window with its decent though dilapidated appearance, seen thus in one and the same building, produced the effect of two ragged beggars bound in the same direction and walking side by side, with different mien under the same rags, one having always been a pauper, while the other had been a gentleman.

The staircase led up to a very spacious interior, which looked like a barn converted into a house. This structure had for its main channel of communication a long hall, on which there opened, on either side, apartments of different dimensions, scarcely habitable, rather resembling booths than rooms. These chambers looked out upon the shapeless grounds of the neighbourhood. Altogether, it was

The Old Gorbeau House.

dark and dull and dreary, even melancholy and sepulchral, and it was penetrated either by the dim, cold rays of the sun or by icy draughts, according to the situation of the cracks in the roof or in the door. One interesting and picturesque peculiarity of this kind of tenement is the monstrous size of the spiders.

To the left of the main door, on the boulevard, a small window that had been walled up formed a square niche, some six feet from the ground, which was filled with stones that passing urchins had thrown into it.

The letter-carriers called the house No. 50-52; but it was known in the quarter as Gorbeau House.

Let us see how it came by that title.

The "gatherers-up of unconsidered trifles," who collect anecdotes as the herbalist his simples, and prick the fleeting dates upon their memories with a pin, know that there lived in Paris, in the last century, about 1770, two attorneys of the Châtelet, one named Corbeau and the other Renard—two names anticipated by La Fontaine. The chance for a joke was altogether too fine a one to be let slip by the goodly company of lawyers' clerks. So, very soon the galleries of the court-rooms rang with the following parody in rather gouty verse:—

" Master Crow, on a document perched,
In his beak, held a fat execution ;
Master Fox, with his jaws well besmirched,
Thus spoke up, to his neighbour's confusion :
' Good day, my fine fellow ! ' quoth he, &c."

The two honest practitioners, annoyed by these shafts of wit, and rather disconcerted in their dignity by the roars of laughter that followed them, resolved to change their names, and, with that view, applied to the King. The petition was presented to Louis XV on the very day on which the Pope's Nuncio and the Cardinal de La Roche-Aymon, in the presence of his Majesty, devoutly kneeling, one on each side

of Madame Du Barry, put her slippers on her naked feet as she was getting out of bed. The King, who was laughing, continued his laugh; he passed gaily from the two bishops to the two advocates, and absolved these limbs of the law from their names almost. It was granted to Master Corbeau, by the King's good pleasure, to add a flourish to the first letter of his name, thus making it Gorbeau; Master Renard was less fortunate, as he only got permission to put a P before the R, which made the word Prenard,* a name no less appropriate than the first one.

Now, according to tradition, this Master Gorbeau was the proprietor of the structure numbered 50-52, Boulevard de l'Hôpital. He was, likewise, the originator of the monumental window.

Hence this building got its name of Gorbeau House.

Opposite No. 50-52 stands, among the shade-trees that line the Boulevard, a tall elm, three-quarters dead, and almost directly in front opens the Rue de la Barrière des Gobelins—a street, at that time, without houses, unpaved, bordered with scrubby trees, grass-grown or muddy, according to the season, and running squarely up to the wall encircling Paris. An odour of vitriol ascended in puffs from the roofs of a neighbouring factory.

The Barrière was quite near. In 1823, the encircling wall yet existed.

This Barrière itself filled the mind with gloomy images. It was on the way to the Bicêtre. It was there that, under the Empire and the Restoration, condemned criminals re-entered Paris on the day of their execution. It was there that, about the year 1829, was committed the mysterious assassination called "the murder of the Barrière de Fontainebleau," the perpetrators of which the authorities have never discovered—a sombre problem which has not yet

* Prenard—a grasping fellow.

been solved, a terrible enigma not yet unravelled. Go a few steps further, and you find that fatal Rue Croulebarbe where Ulbach stabbed the goatherd girl of Ivry, in a thunder-storm, in the style of a melodrama. Still a few steps, and you come to those detestable clipped elm-trees of the Barrière Saint Jacques, that expedient of philanthropists to hide the scaffold, that pitiful and shameful Place de Grève of a cockney shop-keeping society which recoils from capital punishment, yet dares neither to abolish it with lofty dignity, nor to maintain it with firm authority.

Thirty-seven years ago, excepting this place, Saint Jacques, which seemed fore-doomed, and always was horrible, the gloomiest of all this gloomy Boulevard was the spot, still so unattractive, where stood the old building, 50-52.

The city dwelling-houses did not begin to start up there until some twenty five years later. The place was repulsive. In addition to the melancholy thought that seized you there, you felt conscious of being between a La Salpêtrière, the cupola of which was in sight, and Bicêtre, the barrier of which was close by—that is to say, between the wicked folly of woman and that of man. Far as the eye could reach, there was nothing to be seen but the public shambles, the city wall, and here and there the side of a factory, resembling a barrack or a monastery; on all sides, miserable hovels and heaps of rubbish, old walls as black as widows' weeds, and new walls as white as winding-sheets; on all sides, parallel rows of trees, buildings in straight lines, low, flat structures, long, cold perspectives, and the gloomy sameness of right angles. Not a variation of the surface of the ground, not a caprice of architecture, not a curve. Altogether, it was chilly, regular, and hideous. Nothing stifles one like this perpetual symmetry. Symmetry is ennui, and ennui is the very essence of grief and melancholy. Despair yawns. Something more terrible

than a hell of suffering, may be conceived; to wit, a hell of ennui. Were there such a hell in existence, this section of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital might well serve as the approach to it.

Then, at nightfall, at the moment when the day is dying out, especially in winter, at that hour when the evening breeze tears from the elms their faded and withered leaves, when the gloom is deep, without a single star, or when the moon and the wind make openings in the clouds, this boulevard became positively terrifying. The dark outlines shrank together, and even lost themselves in the obscurity, like fragments of the infinite. The passer-by could not keep from thinking of the innumerable bloody traditions of the spot. The solitude of this neighbourhood, in which so many crimes had been committed, had something fearful about it. One felt presentiments of snares in this obscurity; all the confused outlines visible through the gloom were eyed suspiciously, and the oblong cavities between the trees seemed like graves. In the day time it was ugly; in the evening it was dismal; at night it was ominous of evil. In summer, in the twilight, some old woman might be seen seated here and there under the elms, on benches made mouldy by the rain. These good old dames were addicted to begging.

II.

BEFORE this Gorbeau tenement Jean Valjean stopped. Like the birds of prey, he had chosen this lonely place to make his nest.

He fumbled in his waistcoat and took from it a sort of night-key, opened the door, entered, then carefully closed it again, and ascended the stairway, still carrying Cosette.

At the top of the stairway he drew from his pocket

another key, with which he opened another door. The chamber which he entered and closed again immediately was a sort of garret, rather spacious, furnished only with a mattress spread on the floor, a table, and a few chairs. A stove containing a fire, the coals of which were visible, stood in one corner. The street lamp of the boulevard shed a dim light through this poor interior. At the further extremity there was a little room containing a cot bed. On this Jean Valjean laid the child without waking her.

He struck a light with flint and steel, and lit a candle, which, with his tinder-box, stood ready beforehand on the table; and, as he had done on the preceding evening, he began to gaze upon Cosette with a look of ecstasy, in which the expression of goodness and tenderness went almost to the verge of insanity. The little girl, with that tranquil confidence which belongs only to extreme strength or extreme weakness, had fallen asleep without knowing with whom she was, and continued to slumber without knowing where she was.

Jean Valjean bent down and kissed the child's hand.

Nine months before, he had kissed the hand of the mother, who also had just fallen asleep.

The same mournful, pious, agonizing feeling now filled his heart.

He knelt down by the bedside of Cosette.

It was broad daylight, and yet the child slept on. A pale ray from the December sun struggled through the garret window, and traced upon the ceiling long streaks of light and shade. Suddenly a carrier's waggon, heavily laden, trundled over the cobble-stones of the boulevard, and shook the old building like the rumbling of a tempest, jarring it from cellar to roof-tree.

"Yes, Madame!" cried Cosette, starting up out of sleep, "here I am! here I am!"

And she threw herself from the bed, her eyelids still half

closed with the weight of slumber, stretching out her hand towards the corner of the wall.

“Oh ! what shall I do ? Where is my broom ?” said she.

By this time her eyes were fully open, and she saw the smiling face of Jean Valjean.

“Oh ! yes—so it is !” said the child. “Good morning, Monsieur.”

Children at once accept joy and happiness with quick familiarity, being themselves naturally all happiness and joy.

Cosette noticed Catharine at the foot of the bed, laid hold of her at once, and, playing the while, asked Jean Valjean a thousand questions.—Where was she ? Was Paris a big place ? Was Madame Thénardier really very far away ? Wouldn't she come back again ? etc., etc. All at once she exclaimed, “How pretty it is here !”

It was a frightful hovel, but she felt free.

“Must I sweep ?” she continued at length.

“Play !” replied Jean Valjean.

And thus the day passed by. Cosette, without troubling herself with trying to understand anything about it, was inexpressibly happy with her doll and her good friend.

III.

THE dawn of the next day found Jean Valjean again near the bed of Cosette. He waited there, motionless, to see her wake.

Something new was entering his soul.

Jean Valjean had never loved anything. For twenty-five years he had been alone in the world. He had never been a father, lover, husband, or friend. At the galleys, he was cross, sullen, abstinent, ignorant, and intractable. The heart of the old convict was full of freshness. His sister and her children had left in his memory only a vague and

distant impression, which had finally almost entirely vanished. He had made every exertion to find them again, and, not succeeding, had forgotten them. Human nature is thus constituted. The other tender emotions of his youth, if any such he had, were lost in an abyss.

When he saw Cosette, when he had taken her, carried her away, and rescued her, he felt his heart moved. All that he had of feeling and affection was aroused and vehemently attracted towards this child. He would approach the bed where she slept, and would tremble there with delight ; he felt inward yearnings, like a mother, and knew not what they were ; for it is something very incomprehensible and very sweet, this grand and strange emotion of a heart in its first love.

Poor old heart, so young !

But, as he was fifty-five, and Cosette was but eight years old, all that he might have felt of love in his entire life melted into a sort of ineffable radiance.

This was the second white vision he had seen. The bishop had caused the dawn of virtue on his horizon ; Cosette evoked the dawn of love.

The first few days rolled by amid this bewilderment.

On her part, Cosette, too, unconsciously underwent a change, poor little creature ! She was so small when her mother left her, that she could not recollect her now. As all children do, like the young shoots of the vine that cling to everything, she had tried to love. She had not been able to succeed. Everybody had repelled her—the Thénardiens, their children, other children. She had loved the dog ; it died, and after that no person and no thing would have aught to do with her. Mournful thing to tell, and one which we have already hinted, at the age of eight her heart was cold. This was not her fault ; it was not the faculty of love she lacked ; alas ! it was the possibility. And so, from

the very first day, all that thought and felt in her began to love this kind old friend. She now felt sensations utterly unknown to her before—a sensation of budding and of growth.

Her kind friend no longer impressed as old and poor. In her eyes Jean Valjean was handsome, just as the garret had seemed pretty.

Such are the effects of the auroral glow of childhood, youth, and joy. The newness of earth and of life has something to do with it. Nothing is so charming as the ruddy tints that happiness can shed around a garret-room. We all, in the course of our lives, have had our rose-coloured sky-parlour.

Nature had placed a wide chasm—fifty years' interval of age—between Jean Valjean and Cosette. This chasm fate filled up. Fate abruptly brought together, and wedded with its resistless power, these two shattered lives, dissimilar in years, but similar in sorrow. The one, indeed, was the complement of the other. The instinct of Cosette sought for a father, as the instinct of Jean Valjean sought for a child. To meet, was to find one another. In that mysterious moment, when their hands touched, they were welded together. When their two souls saw each other, they recognized that they were mutually needed, and they closely embraced.

Taking the words in their most comprehensive and most absolute sense, it might be said that, separated from everything by the walls of the tomb, Jean Valjean was the husband bereaved, as Cosette was the orphan. This position made Jean Valjean become, in a celestial sense, the father of Cosette.

And, in truth, the mysterious impression produced upon Cosette, in the depths of the woods at Chelles, by the hand of Jean Valjean grasping her own in the darkness, was not an illusion but a reality. The coming of this man and his

participation in the destiny of this child had been the advent of God.

In the meanwhile, Jean Valjean had well chosen his hiding-place. He was there in a state of security that seemed to be complete.

The apartment with the side chamber which he occupied with Cosette was the one whose window looked out upon the boulevard. This window being the only one in the house, there was no neighbour's prying eye to fear, either from that side or opposite.

The lower floor of No. 50-52 was a sort of dilapidated shed ; it served as a sort of stable for market-gardeners, and had no communication with the upper floor. It was separated from it by the flooring, which had neither stairway nor trap-door, and was, as it were, the diaphragm of the old building. The upper floor contained, as we have said, several rooms and a few lofts, only one of which was occupied—by an old woman, who was maid-of-all-work to Jean Valjean. All the rest was uninhabited.

It was this old woman, honoured with the title of landlady, but, in reality, intrusted with the functions of portress, who had rented him these lodgings on Christmas-day. He had passed himself off to her as a gentleman of means, ruined by the Spanish Bonds, who was going to live there with his granddaughter. He had paid her for six months in advance, and engaged the old dame to furnish the chamber and the little bedroom, as we have described them. This old woman it was who had kindled the fire in the stove and made everything ready for them, on the evening of their arrival.

Weeks rolled by. These two beings led in that wretched shelter a happy life.

From the earliest dawn Cosette laughed, prattled, and sang. Children have their morning song, like birds.

Sometimes it happened that Jean Valjean would take her

little red hand, all chapped and frost-bitten as it was, and kiss it. The poor child, accustomed only to blows, had no idea what this meant, and would draw back ashamed.

At times she grew serious, and looked musingly at her little black dress. Cosette was no longer in rags; she was in mourning. She was issuing from utter poverty, and was entering upon life.

Jean Valjean had begun to teach her to read. Sometimes, while teaching the child to spell, he would remember that it was with the intention of accomplishing evil that he had learned to read, in the galleys. This intention had now been changed into teaching a child to read. Then the old convict would smile with the pensive smile of angels.

He felt in this a pre-ordination from on high, a volition of some one more than man, and he would lose himself in reverie. Good thoughts as well as bad have their abysses.

To teach Cosette to read, and to watch her playing, was nearly all Jean Valjean's life. And then he would talk to her about her mother, and teach her to pray.

She called him *father*, and knew him by no other name.

He spent hours seeing her dress and undress her doll, and listening to her song and prattle. From that time on, life seemed full of interest to him, men seemed good and just; he no longer, in his thoughts, reproached any one with any wrong; he saw no reason, now, why he should not live to grow very old, since his child loved him. He looked forward to a long future, illuminated by Cosette with charming light. The very best of us are not altogether exempt from some tinge of egotism. At times he thought, with a sort of quiet satisfaction, that she would be by no means handsome.

This is but a personal opinion; but in order to express

our idea thoroughly, at the point Jean Valjean had reached when he began to love Cosette, it is not clear to us that he did not require this fresh supply of goodness to enable him to persevere in the right path. He had seen the wickedness of men and the misery of society under new aspects—aspects incomplete, and, unfortunately, showing forth only one side of the truth—the lot of woman summed up in Fantine, public authority personified in Javert; he had been sent back to the galleys this time for doing good; new waves of bitterness had overwhelmed him; disgust and weariness had once more resumed their sway; the recollection of the bishop, even, was perhaps almost eclipsed, sure to re-appear afterwards, luminous and triumphant yet, in fact, this blessed remembrance was growing feebler. Who knows that Jean Valjean was not on the point of becoming discouraged and falling back to evil ways? Love came, and he again grew strong. Alas! he was no less feeble than Cosette. He protected her, and she gave strength to him. Thanks to him, she could walk upright in life; thanks to her, he could persist in virtuous deeds. He was the support of this child, and this child was his prop and staff. Oh, divine and unfathomable mystery of the compensations of Destiny!

IV.

JEAN VALJEAN was prudent enough never to go out in the daytime. Every evening, however, about twilight, he would walk for an hour or two, sometimes alone, often with Cosette, selecting the most unfrequented side alleys of the boulevards and, going into the churches at nightfall. He was fond of going to St. Médard, which is the nearest church. When he did not take Cosette, she remained with

the old woman ; but it was the child's delight to go out with her kind old friend. She preferred an hour with him even to her delicious *tête-à-têtes* with Catharine. He would walk along holding her by the hand, and telling her pleasant things.

It turned out that Cosette was very playful.

The old woman was housekeeper and cook, and did the marketing.

They lived frugally, always with a little fire in the stove, but like people in embarrassed circumstances. Jean Valjean made no change in the furniture described on the first day, excepting that he caused a solid door to be put up in place of the glass door of Cosette's little bed-chamber.

He still wore his yellow coat, his black pantaloons, and his old hat. On the street he was taken for a beggar. It sometimes happened that kind-hearted dames, in passing, would turn and hand him a penny. Jean Valjean accepted the penny and bowed humbly. It chanced sometimes, also, that he would meet some wretched creature begging alms, and then, glancing about him to be sure that no one was looking, he would stealthily approach the beggar, slip a piece of money, often silver, into his hand, and walk rapidly away. This had its inconveniences. He began to be known in the quarter as *the beggar who gives alms*.

The old *landlady*, a crabbed creature, fully possessed with that keen observation as to all that concerned her neighbours which is peculiar to the suburbs, watched Jean Valjean closely without exciting his suspicion. She was a little deaf, which made her talkative. She had but two teeth left, one in the upper and one in the lower jaw, and these she was continually rattling together. She had questioned Cosette, who, knowing nothing, could tell nothing, further than that she came from Montfermeil. One morning this old female spy saw Jean Valjean go, with an appearance which seemed peculiar to the old busy-

body, into one of the uninhabited apartments of the building. She followed him with the steps of an old cat, and could see him without herself being seen, through the chink of the door directly opposite. Jean Valjean had, doubtless for greater caution, turned his back towards the door in question. The old woman saw him fumble in his pocket, and take from it a needle-case, scissors, and thread, and then proceed to rip open the lining of one lapel of his coat and take from under it a piece of yellowish paper, which he unfolded. The beldame remarked with dismay that it was a bank bill for a thousand francs. It was the second or third one only that she had ever seen. She ran away very much frightened.

A moment afterwards Jean Valjean accosted her, and asked her to get this thousand-franc bill changed for him, adding that it was the half-yearly interest on his property, which he had received on the previous day. "Where?" thought the old woman. He did not go out until six o'clock, and the government treasury is certainly not open at that hour. The old woman got the note changed, all the while forming her conjectures. This bill of a thousand francs, commented upon and multiplied, gave rise to a host of breathless conferences among the gossips of the Rue des Vignes-Saint-Marcel.

Some days afterwards, it chanced that Jean Valjean, in his shirt-sleeves, was sawing wood in the entry. The old woman was in his room doing the chamberwork. She was alone. Cosette was intent upon the wood he was sawing. The old woman saw the coat hanging on a nail, and examined it. The lining had been sewed over. She felt it carefully, and thought she could detect in the lapels and in the padding thicknesses of paper. Other thousand-franc bills beyond a doubt!

She noticed, besides, that there were all sorts of things in the pockets. Not only were there the needles, scissors,

and thread which she had already seen, but a large pocket-book, a very big knife, and worst symptom of all, several wigs of different colours. Every pocket of this coat had the appearance of containing something to be provided with against sudden emergencies.

Thus the occupants of the old building reached the closing days of winter.

V.

THERE was, in the neighbourhood of Saint Médard, a mendicant who sat crouching over the edge of a condemned public well near by, and to whom Jean Valjean often gave alms. He never passed this man without giving him a few pennies. Sometimes he spoke to him. Those who were envious of this poor creature said he was in the pay of the police. He was an old church beadle of seventy-five, who was always mumbling prayers.

One evening, as Jean Valjean was passing that way, unaccompanied by Cosette, he noticed the beggar sitting in his usual place under the street-lamp, which had just been lighted. The man, according to custom, seemed to be praying, and was bent over. Jean Valjean walked up to him and put a piece of money in his hand, as usual. The beggar suddenly raised his eyes, gazed intently at Jean Valjean, and then quickly dropped his head. This movement was like a flash; Jean Valjean shuddered; it seemed to him that he had just seen, by the light of the street-lamp not the calm, sanctimonious face of the aged beadle, but a terrible and well-known countenance. He experienced the sensation one would feel on finding himself suddenly face to face, in the gloom, with a tiger. He recoiled, horror-stricken and petrified, daring neither to breathe nor

to speak, to stay nor to fly, but gazing upon the beggar who had once more bent down his head, with its tattered covering, and seemed to be no longer conscious of his presence. At this singular moment, an instinct, perhaps the mysterious instinct of self-preservation, prevented Jean Valjean from uttering a word. The beggar had the same form, the same rags, the same general appearance as on every other day. "Pshaw!" said Jean Valjean to himself, "I am mad! I am dreaming! It cannot be!" And he went home, anxious and ill at ease.

He scarcely dared to admit, even to himself, that the countenance he thought he had seen was the face of Javert.

That night, upon reflection, he regretted that he had not questioned the man, so as to compel him to raise his head a second time. On the morrow, at nightfall, he went thither again. The beggar was in his place. "Good day! Good day!" said Jean Valjean, with firmness, as he gave him the accustomed alms. The beggar raised his head and answered in a whining voice, "Thanks, kind sir, thanks!" It was, indeed, only the old beadle.

Jean Valjean now felt fully reassured. He even began to laugh. "What the deuce was I about to fancy that I saw Javert?" thought he; "Is my sight growing poor already?" And he thought no more about it.

Some days after, it might be eight o'clock in the evening, he was in his room, giving Cosette her spelling lesson, which the child was repeating in a loud voice, when he heard the door of the building open and close again. That seemed odd to him. The old woman, the only occupant of the house besides himself and Cosette, always went to bed at dark to save candles. Jean Valjean made a sign to Cosette to be silent. He heard some one coming upstairs. Possibly it might be the old woman, who had felt unwell, and had been to the druggist's. Jean Valjean listened. The footstep was heavy, and sounded like a man's; but the old

woman wore heavy shoes, and there is nothing so much like the step of a man as the step of an old woman. However, Jean Valjean blew out his candle.

He sent Cosette to bed, telling her in a suppressed voice to lie down very quietly—and, as he kissed her forehead, the footsteps stopped. Jean Valjean remained silent and motionless, his back turned towards the door, still seated on his chair, from which he had not moved, and holding his breath in the darkness. After a considerable interval, not hearing anything more, he turned round without making any noise, and as he raised his eyes towards the door of his room he saw a light through the keyhole. This ray of light was an evil star in the black background of the door and the wall. There was, evidently, somebody outside with a candle who was listening.

A few minutes elapsed, and the light disappeared. But he heard no sound of footsteps, which seemed to indicate that whoever was listening at the door had taken off his shoes.

Jean Valjean threw himself on his bed without undressing, but could not shut his eyes that night.

At daybreak, as he was sinking into slumber from fatigue, he was aroused again by the creaking of the door of some room at the end of the hall, and then he heard the same footstep which had ascended the stairs on the preceding night. The step approached. He started from his bed and placed his eye to the keyhole, which was quite a large one, hoping to get a glimpse of the person, whoever it might be, who had made his way into the building in the night-time and had listened at his door. It was a man, indeed, who had passed by Jean Valjean's room, this time, without stopping. The hall was still too dark for him to make out his features; but, when the man reached the stairs, a ray of light from without made his figure stand out like a profile, and Jean Valjean had a full view of his back.

The man was tall, wore a long frock-coat, and had a cudgel under his arm. It was the redoubtable form of Javert.

Jean Valjean might have tried to get another look at him through his window that opened on the boulevard, but he would have had to raise the sash, and that he dared not do.

It was evident that the man had entered by means of a key, as if at home. "Who, then, had given him the key?—and what was the meaning of this?"

At seven in the morning, when the old lady came to clear up the rooms, Jean Valjean eyed her sharply, but asked her no questions. The good dame appeared as usual.

While she was doing her sweeping, she said,—

"Perhaps Monsieur heard some one come in last night?"

At her age, and on that boulevard, eight in the evening is the very darkest of the night.

"Ah! yes, by the way, I did," he answered, in the most natural tone. "Who was it?"

"It's a new lodger," said the old woman, "who has come into the house."

"And his name is—"

"Well, I hardly recollect now. **Dumont** or **Daumont**.—Some such name as that."

"And what is he—this M. Daumont?"

The old woman studied him a moment through her little foxy eyes, and answered,—

"He's a gentleman living on his income, like you."

She may have intended nothing by this, but Jean Valjean thought he could make out that she did.

When the old woman was gone, he made a roll of a hundred francs he had in a drawer and put it into his pocket. Do what he would to manage this so that the clinking of the silver should not be heard, a five-franc piece escaped his grasp and rolled jingling away over the floor.

At dusk he went to the street door and looked carefully up and down the boulevard. No one was to be seen. The

boulevard seemed utterly deserted. It is true that there might have been some one hidden behind a tree.

He went upstairs again.

"Come," said he to Cosette.

He took her by the hand, and they both went out





Book Fourth

A DARK CHASE NEEDS A SILENT HOUND

I.

JEAN VALJEAN had immediately left the boulevard and began to thread the streets, making as many turns as he could, returning sometimes upon his track to make sure that he was not followed.

This manœuvre is peculiar to the hunted stag. On ground where the foot leaves a mark, it has, among other advantages, that of deceiving the hunters and the dogs by the counter-step. It is what is called in venery *false reimbushment*.

The moon was full. Jean Valjean was not sorry for that. The moon, still near the horizon, cut large prisms of light and shade in the streets. Jean Valjean could glide along the houses and the walls on the dark side and observe the light side. He did not, perhaps, sufficiently realize that the obscure side escaped him. However, in all the deserted little streets of the neighbourhood of the Rue de Poliveau, he felt sure that no one was behind him.

Cosette walked without asking any questions. The suf-

ferings of the first six years of her life had introduced something of the passive into her nature. Besides—and this is a remark to which we shall have more than one occasion to return—she had become familiar, without being fully conscious of them, with the peculiarities of her good friend and the eccentricities of destiny. And then she felt safe, being with him.

Jean Valjean knew no more than Cosette where he was going. He trusted in God, as she trusted in him. It seemed to him that he also held some one greater than himself by the hand; he believed he felt a being leading him, invisible. Finally, he had no definite idea, no plan, no project. He was not even absolutely sure that this was Javert; and then it might be Javert, and Javert not know that he was Jean Valjean. Was he not disguised? Was he not supposed to be dead? Nevertheless, singular things had happened within the last few days. He wanted no more of them. He was determined not to enter Gorbeau House again. Like the animal hunted from his den, he was looking for a hole, to hide in until he could find one to remain in.

Jean Valjean described many and varied labyrinths in the Quartier Mouffetard, which was asleep already, as if it were still under the discipline of the Middle Age and the yoke of the curfew; he produced different combinations, in wise strategy, with the Rue Censier and the Rue Copeau, the Rue du Battoir Saint Victor and the Rue du Puits l'Ermite. There are lodgings in that region, but he did not even enter them, not finding what suited him. He had no doubt whatever that if, perchance, they had sought his track, they had lost it.

As eleven o'clock struck in the tower of Saint Etienne du Mont, he crossed the Rue de Pontoise in front of the bureau of the Commissary of Police, which is at No. 14. Some moments afterwards, the instinct of

which we have already spoken made him turn his head. At this moment he saw distinctly—thanks to the commissary's lamp which revealed them—three men following him quite near, pass one after another under this lamp on the dark side of the street. One of these men entered the passage leading to the commissary's house. The one in advance appeared to him decidedly suspicious.

"Come, child!" said he to Cosette, and he made haste to get out of the Rue de Pontoise.

He made a circuit, went round the Arcade des Patriarches, which was closed on account of the lateness of the hour, walked rapidly through the Rue de l'Epée-de-Bois and the Rue de l'Arbalète, and plunged into the Rue des Postes.

There was a square there, where the Collège Rollin now is, and from which branches off the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève.

(We need not say that the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève is an old street, and that there a postchaise did not pass once in ten years through the Rue des Postes. This Rue des Postes was in the thirteenth century inhabited by potters, and its true name is Rue des Pots.)

The moon lighted up this square brightly. Jean Valjean concealed himself in a doorway, calculating that if these men were still following him, he could not fail to get a good view of them when they crossed this lighted space.

In fact, three minutes had not elapsed when the men appeared. There were now four of them; all were tall, dressed in long brown coats, with round hats, and great clubs in their hands. They were not less fearfully forbidding by their size and their large fists than by their stealthy tread in the darkness. One would have taken them for four spectres in citizen's dress.

They stopped in the centre of the square and formed a group, like people consulting. They appeared undecided.

The man who seemed to be the leader turned and energetically pointed in the direction in which Jean Valjean was; one of the others seemed to insist with some obstinacy on the contrary direction. At the instant when the leader turned, the moon shone full in his face. Jean Valjean recognized Javert perfectly.

II.

UNCERTAINTY was at an end for Jean Valjean; happily, it still continued with these men. He took advantage of their hesitation; it was time lost for them, gained for him. He came out from the doorway in which he was concealed, and made his way into the Rue des Postes towards the region of the Jardin des Plantes. Cosette began to be tired; he took her in his arms and carried her. There was nobody in the streets, and the lamps had not been lighted on account of the moon.

He doubled his pace.

In a few steps he reached the Goblet pottery, on the façade of which the old inscription stood out distinctly legible in the light of the moon.

He passed through the Rue de la Clef, then by the Fontaine de Saint Victor along the Jardin des Plantes by the lower streets, and reached the quay. There he looked around. The quay was deserted. The streets were deserted. Nobody behind him. He took breath.

He arrived at the bridge of Austerlitz.

It was still a toll-bridge at this period.

He presented himself at the toll-house and gave a sou.

"It is two sous," said the toll-keeper. "You are carrying a child who can walk. Pay for two."

He paid, annoyed that his passage should have attracted observation. All flight should be a gliding.

A large cart was passing the Seine at the same time, and like him was going towards the right bank. This could be made of use. He could go the whole length of the bridge in the shade of this cart.

Towards the middle of the bridge, Cosette, her feet becoming numb, desired to walk. He put her down and took her by the hand.

The bridge passed, he perceived some wood-yards a little to the right and walked in that direction. To get there, he must venture into a large, clear open space. He did not hesitate. Those who followed him were evidently thrown off his track, and Jean Valjean believed himself out of danger. Sought for he might be, but followed he was not.

A little street, the Rue du Chemin-Vert Saint Antoine, opened between two wood-yards inclosed by walls. This street was narrow, obscure, and seemed made expressly for him. Before entering it, he looked back.

From the point where he was, he could see the whole length of the bridge of Austerlitz.

Four shadows at that moment entered upon the bridge.

These shadows were coming from the Jardin des Plantes towards the right bank.

These four shadows were the four men.

Jean Valjean felt a shudder like that of the deer when he sees the hounds again upon his track.

One hope was left him ; it was that these men had not entered upon the bridge, and had not perceived him when he crossed the large clear space leading Cosette by the hand.

In that case, by plunging into the little street before him, if he could succeed in reaching the wood-yards, the marshes, the fields, the open grounds, he could escape.

It seemed to him that he might trust himself to this silent little street. He entered it.

III.

SOME three hundred paces on, he reached a point where the street forked. It divided into two streets, the one turning off obliquely to the left, the other to the right. Jean Valjean had before him the two branches of a Y. Which should he choose?

He did not hesitate, but took the right.

Why?

Because the left branch led towards the faubourg—that is to say, towards the inhabited region, and the right branch towards the country—that is, towards the uninhabited region.

But now they no longer walked very fast. Cosette's step slackened Jean Valjean's pace.

He took her up and carried her again. Cosette rested her head upon the goodman's shoulder, and did not say a word.

He turned from time to time and looked back. He took care to keep always on the dark side of the street. The street was straight behind him. The two or three first times he turned he saw nothing; the silence was complete, and he kept on his way somewhat reassured. Suddenly, on turning again, he thought he saw in the portion of the street through which he had just passed, far in the obscurity, something which stirred.

He plunged forward rather than walked, hoping to find some side street by which to escape, and once more to elude his pursuers.

He came to a wall.

This wall, however, did not prevent him from going further; it was a wall forming the side of a cross alley, in which the street Jean Valjean was then in came to an end.

Here again he must decide ; should he take the right or the left.

He looked to the right. The alley ran out into a space between some buildings that were mere sheds or barns, then terminated abruptly. The end of this blind alley was plain to be seen—a great white wall.

He looked to the left. The alley on this side was open, and, about two hundred paces further on, ran into a street of which it was an affluent. In this direction lay safety.

The instant Jean Valjean decided to turn to the left, to try to reach the street which he saw at the end of the alley, he perceived, at the corner of the alley and the street towards which he was just about going, a sort of black motionless statue.

It was a man, who had just been posted there, evidently, and who was waiting for him, guarding the passage.

Jean Valjean was startled.

This part of Paris where Jean Valjean was, situated between the Faubourg Saint Antoine and the La Râpée, is one of those which have been entirely transformed by the recent works—a change for the worse, in the opinion of some, a transfiguration, according to others. The vegetable gardens, the wood-yards, and the old buildings are gone. There are now broad new streets, amphitheatres, circuses, hippodromes, railroad depôts, a prison, Mazas ; progress, as we see, with its corrective.

Half a century ago, in the common popular language, full of tradition, which obstinately calls l'Institut *Les Quatre Nations*, and l'Opera Comique *Feydeau*, the precise spot which Jean Valjean had reached was called the *Petit Picpus*.

The Petit Picpus, which in fact hardly had a real existence, and was never more than a mere outline of a quarter, had almost the monkish aspect of a Spanish city. The roads were poorly paved, the streets were thinly built up.

Beyond the two or three streets of which we are about to speak, there was nothing there but wall and solitude. Not a shop, not a vehicle, hardly a light here and there in the windows ; all the lights put out after ten o'clock. Gardens, convents, wood-yards, market-gardens, a few scattered low houses, and great walls as high as the houses.

Jean Valjean was in this place.

As we have said, on perceiving the black form standing sentry at the corner of the Rue Droit Mur and the Petite Rue Picpus, he was startled. There was no doubt. He was watched by this shadow.

What should he do ?

There was now no time to turn back. What he had seen moving in the obscurity some distance behind him, the moment before, was undoubtedly Javert and his squad. Javert probably had already reached the commencement of the street of which Jean Valjean was at the end. Javert, to all appearance, was acquainted with this little trap, and had taken his precautions by sending one of his men to guard the exit. These conjectures, so like certainties, whirled about wildly in Jean Valjean's troubled brain, as a handful of dust flies before a sudden blast. He scrutinized the Cul-de-sac Genrot ; there were high walls. He scrutinized the Petite Rue Picpus ; there was a sentinel. He saw that dark form repeated in black upon the white pavement flooded with the moonlight. To advance, was to fall upon that man. To go back, was to throw himself into Javert's hands. Jean Valjean felt as if caught by a chain that was slowly winding up. He looked up into the sky in despair.

IV.

In order to understand what follows, it is necessary to form an exact idea of the little Rue Droit Mur, and particularly

the corner which it makes at the left as you leave the Rue Polonceau to enter this alley. The little Rue Droit Mur was almost entirely lined on the right, as far as the Petite Rue Picpus, by houses of poor appearance; on the left by a single building of severe outline, composed of several structures which rose gradually a story or two, one above another, as they approached the Petite Rue Picpus, so that the building, very high on the side of the Petite Rue Picpus, was quite low on the side of the Rue Polonceau. There, at the corner of which we have spoken, it became so low as to be nothing more than a wall. This wall did not abut squarely on the corner, which was cut off diagonally, leaving a considerable space that was shielded by the two angles thus formed from observers at a distance in either the Rue Polonceau or the Rue Droit Mur.

From these two angles of the truncated corner, the wall extended along the Rue Polonceau as far as a house numbered 49, and along the Rue Droit Mur, where its height was much less, to the sombre-looking building of which we have spoken, cutting its gable, and thus making a new re-entering angle in the street. This gable had a gloomy aspect; there was but one window to be seen, or rather two shutters covered with a sheet of zinc, and always closed.

The situation of the places which we describe here is rigorously exact, and will certainly awaken a very precise remembrance in the minds of the old inhabitants of the locality.

This truncated corner was entirely filled by a thing which seemed like a colossal and miserable door. It was a vast shapeless assemblage of perpendicular planks, broader above than below, bound together by long transverse iron bands. At the side there was a porte-cochère of the ordinary dimensions, which had evidently been cut in within the last fifty years.

A lime-tree lifted its branches above this corner, and the wall was covered with ivy towards the Rue Polonceau.

In the imminent peril of Jean Valjean, this sombre building had a solitary and uninhabited appearance which attracted him. He glanced over it rapidly. He thought if he could only succeed in getting into it, he would perhaps be safe. Hope came to him with the idea.

Midway of the front of this building on the Rue Droit Mur there were at all the windows of the different stories old leaden waste-pipes. The varied branchings of the tubing, which was continued from a central conduit to each of these waste-pipes, outlined on the façade a sort of tree. These ramifications of the pipes with their hundred elbows seemed like those old closely-pruned grape-vines which twist about over the front of ancient farm-houses.

This grotesque espalier, with its sheet-iron branches, was the first object which Jean Valjean saw. He seated Cosette with her back against a post, and, telling her to be quiet, ran to the spot where the conduit came to the pavement. Perhaps there was some means of scaling the wall by that and entering the house. But the conduit was dilapidated and out of use, and scarcely held by its fastening. Besides, all the windows of this silent house were protected by thick bars of iron, even the dormer windows. And then the moon shone full upon this façade, and the man who was watching from the end of the street would have seen Jean Valjean making the escalade. And then what should he do with Cosette? How could he raise her to the top of a three-story house?

He gave up climbing by the conduit, and crept along the wall to the Rue Polonceau.

When he reached this flattened corner where he had left Cosette, he noticed that there no one could see him. He escaped, as we have just explained, all observation from every side. Besides, he was in the shade. Then there

were two doors. Perhaps they might be forced. The wall, above which he saw the lime and the ivy, evidently surrounded a garden, where he could at least conceal himself, although there were no leaves on the trees yet, and pass the rest of the night.

Time was passing. He must act quickly.

He tried the carriage door, and found at once that it was fastened within and without.

He approached the other large door with more hope. It was frightfully decrepit, its immense size even rendering it less solid; the planks were rotten, the iron fastenings, of which there were three, were rusted. It seemed possible to pierce this worm-eaten structure.

On examining it, he saw that this door was not a door. It had neither hinges, braces, lock, nor crack in the middle. The iron bands crossed from one side to the other without a break. Through the crevices of the planks he saw the rubble-work and stones, roughly cemented, which passers-by could have seen within the last ten years. He was compelled to admit with consternation that this appearance of a door was simply an ornamentation in wood of a wall, upon which it was placed. It was easy to tear off a board, but then he would find himself face to face with a wall.

V.

At this moment a muffled and regular sound began to make itself heard at some distance. Jean Valjean ventured to thrust his head a little way round the corner of the street. Seven or eight soldiers, formed in platoon, had just turned into the Rue Polonceau. He saw the gleam of their bayonets. They were coming towards him.

These soldiers, at whose head he distinguished the tall

form of Javert, advanced slowly and with precaution. They stopped frequently. It was plain they were exploring all the recesses of the walls and all the entrances of doors and alleys.

It was—and here conjecture could not be deceived—some patrol which Javert had met, and which he had put in requisition.

Javert's two assistants marched in the ranks.

At the rate at which they were marching, and with the stops they were making, it would take them about a quarter of an hour to arrive at the spot where Jean Valjean was. It was a frightful moment. A few minutes separated Jean Valjean from that awful precipice which was opening before him for the third time. And the galleys now were no longer simply the galleys, they were Cosette lost for ever; that is to say, a life in death.

There was now only one thing possible.

Jean Valjean had this peculiarity, that he might be said to carry two knapsacks; in one he had the thoughts of a saint, in the other the formidable talents of a convict. He helped himself from one or the other as occasion required.

Among other resources, thanks to his numerous escapes from the galleys at Toulon, he had, it will be remembered, become master of that incredible art of raising himself in the right angle of a wall, if need be to the height of a sixth story; an art without ladders or props, by mere muscular strength, supporting himself by the back of his neck, his shoulders, his hips, and his knees, hardly making use of the few projections of the stone, which rendered so terrible and so celebrated the corner of the yard of the Conciergerie of Paris, by which, some twenty years ago, the convict Battemolle made his escape.

Jean Valjean measured with his eyes the wall above which he saw the lime-tree. It was about eighteen feet high. The angle that it made with the gable of the great

building was filled in its lower part with a pile of masonry of triangular shape, probably intended to preserve this too convenient recess from a too public use. This preventive filling-up of the corners of a wall is very common in Paris.

This pile was about five feet high. From its top the space to climb to get upon the wall was hardly more than fourteen feet.

The wall was capped by a flat stone without any projection.

The difficulty was Cosette. Cosette did not know how to scale a wall. Abandon her? Jean Valjean did not think of it. To carry her was impossible. The whole strength of a man is necessary to accomplish these strange ascents. The least burden would make him lose his centre of gravity, and he would fall.

He needed a cord. Jean Valjean had none. Where could he find a cord at midnight in the Rue Polonceau? Truly, at that instant, if Jean Valjean had had a kingdom, he would have given it for a rope.

All extreme situations have their flashes, which sometimes make us blind, sometimes illuminate us.

The despairing gaze of Jean Valjean encountered the lamp-post in the Cul-de-sac Genrot.

At this epoch there were no gas-lights in the streets of Paris. At nightfall they lighted the street-lamps, which were placed at intervals, and were raised and lowered by means of a rope traversing the street from end to end, running through the grooves of posts. The reel on which this rope was wound was inclosed below the lantern in a little iron box, the key of which was kept by the lamp-lighter, and the rope itself was protected by a casing of metal.

Jean Valjean, with the energy of a final struggle, crossed the street at a bound, entered the cul-de-sac, sprang the bolt of the little box with the point of his knife, and an

instant after was back at the side of Cosette. He had a rope. These desperate inventors of expedients, in their struggles with fatality, move electrically in case of need.

We have explained that the street-lamps had not been lighted that night. The lamp in the Cul-de-sac Genrou was then, as a matter of course, extinguished like the rest and one might pass by without even noticing that it was not in its place.

Meanwhile the hour, the place, the darkness, the pre-occupation of Jean Valjean, his singular actions, his going to and fro—all this began to disturb Cosette. Any other child would have uttered loud cries long before. She contented herself with pulling Jean Valjean by the skirt of his coat. The sound of the approaching patrol was constantly becoming more and more distinct.

"Father," said she, in a whisper, "I am afraid. Who is that coming?"

"Hush!" answered the unhappy man, "it is the Thénardiess."

Cosette shuddered. He added,—

"Don't say a word; I'll take care of her. If you cry, if you make any noise, the Thénardiess will hear you. She is coming to catch you."

Then, without any haste, but without doing anything a second time, with a firm and rapid precision, so much the more remarkable at such a moment, when the patrol and Javert might come upon him at any instant, he took off his cravat, passed it round Cosette's body under the arms taking care that it should not hurt the child, attached this cravat to an end of the rope by means of the knot which seamen call a swallow-knot, took the other end of the rope in his teeth, took off his shoes and stockings and threw them over the wall, climbed upon the pile of masonry and began to raise himself in the angle of the wall and the gable with as much solidity and certainty as if he had the

rounds of a ladder under his heels and his elbows. Half a minute had not passed before he was on his knees on the wall.

Cosette watched him, stupefied, without saying a word. Jean Valjean's charge and the name of the Thénardiess had made her dumb.

All at once she heard Jean Valjean's voice calling to her in a low whisper,—

"Put your back against the wall."

She obeyed.

"Don't speak, and don't be afraid," added Jean Valjean.

And she felt herself lifted from the ground.

Before she had time to think where she was she was at the top of the wall.

Jean Valjean seized her, put her on his back, took her two little hands in his left hand, lay down flat, and crawled along the top of the wall as far as the cut-off corner. As he had supposed, there was a building there, the roof of which sloped from the top of the wooden casing we have mentioned very nearly to the ground, with a gentle inclination, and just reaching to the lime-tree.

A fortunate circumstance, for the wall was much higher on this side than on the street. Jean Valjean saw the ground beneath him at a great depth.

He had just reached the inclined plane of the roof, and had not yet left the crest of the wall, when a violent uproar proclaimed the arrival of the patrol. He heard the thundering voice of Javert,—

"Search the cul-de-sac ! The Rue Droit Mur is guarded, the Petite Rue Picpus also. I'll answer for it he is in the cul-de-sac."

The soldiers rushed into the Cul-de-sac Genrot.

Jean Valjean slid down the roof, keeping hold of Cosette, reached the lime-tree, and jumped to the

ground. Whether from terror, or from courage, Cosette had not uttered a whisper. Her hands were a little scraped.

VL

JEAN VALJEAN found himself in a sort of garden, very large, and of a singular appearance ; one of those gloomy gardens which seem made to be seen in the winter and a night. This garden was oblong, with a row of large poplars at the further end, some tall forest trees in the corners and a clear space in the centre, where stood a very large isolated tree, then a few fruit-trees, contorted and shaggy like big bushes, some vegetable beds, a melon patch, the glass covers of which shone in the moonlight, and an old well. There were here and there stone benches, which seemed black with moss. The walks were bordered with sorry little shrubs, perfectly straight. The grass covered half of them, and a green moss covered the rest.

Jean Valjean had on one side the building, down the roof of which he had come, a wood-pile, and behind the wood, against the wall, a stone statue, the mutilated face of which was now nothing but a shapeless mask, which was seen dimly through the obscurity.

The building was in ruins, but some dismantled rooms could be distinguished in it, one of which was well filled and appeared to serve as a shed.

The large building of the Rue Droit Mur, which ran back on the Petite Rue Picpus, presented upon this garden two square façades. These inside façades were still more gloomy than those on the outside. All the windows were grated. No light was to be seen. On the upper stories there were shutters as in prisons. The shadow of one of these façades

was projected upon the other, and fell on the garden like an immense black pall.

No other house could be seen. The further end of the garden was lost in mist and in darkness. Still, he could make out walls intersecting, as if there were other cultivated grounds beyond, as well as the low roofs of the Rue Polonceau.

Nothing can be imagined more wild and more solitary than this garden. There was no one there, which was very natural on account of the hour ; but it did not seem as if the place were made for anybody to walk in, even in broad noon.

Jean Valjean's first care had been to find his shoes, and put them on ; then he entered the shed with Cosette. A man trying to escape never thinks himself sufficiently concealed. The child, thinking constantly of the Thénardiess, shared his instinct, and cowered down as closely as she could.

Cosette trembled, and pressed closely to his side. They heard the tumultuous clamour of the patrol ransacking the cul-de-sac and the street, the clatter of their muskets against the stones, the calls of Javert to the watchmen he had stationed, and his imprecations, mingled with words which they could not distinguish.

At the end of a quarter of an hour it seemed as though this stormy rumbling began to recede. Jean Valjean did not breathe.

He had placed his hand gently upon Cosette's mouth.

But the solitude about him was so strangely calm that that frightful din, so furious and so near, did not even cast over it a shadow of disturbance. It seemed as if these walls were built of the deaf stones spoken of in Scripture.

Suddenly, in the midst of this deep calm, a new sound arose ; a celestial, divine, ineffable sound, as ravishing as the other was horrible. It was a hymn which came forth

from the darkness, a bewildering mingling of prayer and harmony in the obscure and fearful silence of the night ; voices of women, but voices with the pure accents of virgins, and artless accents of children ; those voices which are not of earth, and which resemble those that the newborn still hear, and the dying hear already. This song came from the gloomy building which overlooked the garden. At the moment when the uproar of the demons receded, one would have said it was a choir of angels approaching in the darkness.

Cosette and Jean Valjean fell on their knees.

They knew not what it was ; they knew not where they were ; but they both felt, the man and the child, the penitent and the innocent, that they ought to be on their knees.

These voices had this strange effect ; they did not prevent the building from appearing deserted. It was like a supernatural song in an uninhabited dwelling.

While these voices were singing, Jean Valjean was entirely absorbed in them. He no longer saw the night ; he saw a blue sky. He seemed to feel the spreading of those wings which we all have within us.

The chant ceased. Perhaps it had lasted a long time. Jean Valjean could not have told. Hours of ecstasy are never more than a moment.

All had again relapsed into silence. There was nothing more in the street, nothing more in the garden. That which threatened, and that which reassured, all had vanished. The wind rattled the dry grass on the top of the wall, which made a low, soft, and mournful noise.

VII.

THE night-wind had risen, which indicated that it must be between one and two o'clock in the morning. Poor Cosette

did not speak. As she had sat down at his side and leaned her head on him, Jean Valjean thought that she was asleep.

He bent over and looked at her. Her eyes were wide open, and she had a look that gave Jean Valjean pain.

She was still trembling.

"Are you sleepy?" said Jean Valjean.

"I am very cold," she answered.

A moment after she added,—

"Is she there yet?"

"Who?" said Jean Valjean.

"Madame Thénardier."

Jean Valjean had already forgotten the means he had employed to secure Cosette's silence.

"Oh!" said he, "she has gone. Don't be afraid any longer."

The child sighed as if a weight were lifted from her breast.

The ground was damp, the shed open on all sides, the wind freshened every moment. The goodman took off his coat and wrapped Cosette in it.

"Are you warmer so?"

"Oh yes, father!"

"Well, wait here a moment for me. I shall soon be back."

He went out of the ruin, and along by the large building, in search of some better shelter. He found doors, but they were all closed. All the windows of the ground-floor were barred.

As he passed the interior angle of the building, he noticed several arched windows before him, where he perceived some light. He rose on tiptoe and looked in at one of these windows. They all opened into a large hall, paved with broad slabs, and intersected by arches and pillars; he could distinguish nothing but a slight glimmer in the deep obscurity. This glimmer came from a night-lamp burning

in a corner. The hall was deserted ; everything was motionless. However, by dint of looking, he thought he saw something stretched out on the pavement, which appeared to be covered with a shroud, and which resembled a human form. It was lying with the face downwards, the arms crossed, in the immobility of death. One would have said, from a sort of serpent which trailed along the pavement, that this ill-omened figure had a rope about its neck.

The whole hall was enveloped in that mist peculiar to dimly-lighted places, which always increases horror.

Jean Valjean has often said since that, although in the course of his life he had seen many funereal sights, never had he seen anything more freezing and more terrible than this enigmatical figure fulfilling some strange mystery, he knew not what, in that gloomy place, and thus dimly seen in the night. It was terrifying to suppose that it was perhaps dead, and still more terrifying to think that it might be alive.

He had the courage to press his forehead against the glass, and watch to see if the thing would move. He remained what seemed to him a long time in vain ; the prostrate form made no movement. Suddenly he was seized with an inexpressible dismay, and he fled. He ran towards the shed without daring to look behind him. It seemed to him that, if he should turn his head, he would see the figure walking behind him with rapid strides and shaking its arms.

He reached the ruin breathless. His knees gave way ; a cold sweat oozed out from every pore.

Where was he ? Who would ever have imagined anything equal to this species of sepulchre in the midst of Paris ? What was this strange house ? A building full of nocturnal mystery, calling to souls in the shade with the voice of angels, and, when they came, abruptly presenting to them this frightful vision—promising to open the radiant gate of heaven, and opening the horrible door of the tomb. And

that **was** in fact a building, a house which had its number in a street? It was not a dream? He had to touch the walls to believe it.

The cold, the anxiety, the agitation, the anguish of the night, were giving him a veritable fever, and all his ideas were jostling in his brain.

He went to Cosette. She was sleeping.

VIII.

THE child had laid her head upon a stone and gone to sleep.

He sat down near her and looked at her. Little by little, as he beheld her, he grew calm, and regained possession of his clearness of mind.

He plainly perceived this truth—the basis of his life henceforth—that so long as she should be alive, so long as he should have her with him, he should need nothing except for her, and fear nothing save on her account. He did not even realize that he was very cold, having taken off his coat to cover her.

Meanwhile, through the reverie into which he had fallen he had heard for some time a singular noise. It sounded like a little bell that some one was shaking. This noise was in the garden. It was heard distinctly, though feebly. It resembled the dimly-heard tinkling of cow-bells in the pastures at night.

This noise made Jean Valjean turn.

He looked and saw that there was some one in the garden.

Something which resembled a man was walking among the glass cases of the melon patch, rising up, stooping down, stopping, with a regular motion as if he were drawing or

stretching something upon the ground. This being appeared to limp.

Jean Valjean shuddered with the continual tremour of the outcast. To them everything is hostile and suspicious. They distrust the day because it helps to discover them, and the night because it helps to surprise them. Just now he was shuddering because the garden was empty, now he shuddered because there was some one in it.

He fell again from chimerical terrors into real terrors. He said to himself that perhaps Javert and his spies had not gone away, that they had doubtless left somebody on the watch in the street; that, if this man should discover him in the garden, he would cry thief, and would deliver him up. He took the sleeping Cosette gently in his arms, and carried her into the furthest corner of the shed, behind a heap of old furniture that was out of use. Cosette did not stir.

From there he watched the strange motions of the man in the melon patch. It seemed very singular, but the sound of the bell followed every movement of the man. When the man approached, the sound approached; when he moved away, the sound moved away; if he made some sudden motion, a trill accompanied the motion; when he stopped, the noise ceased. It seemed evident that the bell was fastened to this man; but then what could that mean? what was this man to whom a bell was hung as to a ram or a cow?

While he was revolving these questions he touched Cosette's hands. They were icy.

"O God!" said he.

He called to her in a low voice,—

"Cosette!"

She did not open her eyes.

He shook her smartly.

She did not wake.

"Could she be dead?" said he, and he sprang up, shuddering from head to foot.

The most frightful thoughts rushed through his mind in confusion. There are moments when hideous suppositions besiege us like a throng of furies, and violently force the portals of our brain. When those whom we love are in danger, our solicitude invents all sorts of follies. He remembered that sleep may be fatal in the open air in a cold night.

Cosette was pallid ; she had fallen prostrate on the ground at his feet, making no sign.

He listened for her breathing ; she was breathing ; but with a respiration that appeared feeble and about to stop.

How should he get her warm again ? how rouse her ? All else was banished from his thoughts. He rushed desperately out of the ruin.

It was absolutely necessary that in less than a quarter of an hour Cosette should be in bed and before a fire.

IX.

HE walked straight to the man whom he saw in the garden. He had taken in his hand the roll of money which was in his vest-pocket.

This man had his head down, and did not see him coming. A few strides, Jean Valjean was at his side.

Jean Valjean approached him, exclaiming,—

"A hundred francs !"

The man started, and raised his eyes.

"A hundred francs for you," continued Jean Valjean, "if you will give me refuge to-night."

The moon shone full in Jean Valjean's bewildered face.

"What, it is you, Father Madeleine !" said the man.

This name, thus pronounced, at this dark hour, in this unknown place, by this unknown man, made Jean Valjean start back.

He was ready for anything but that. The speaker was an old man, bent and lame, dressed much like a peasant, who had on his left knee a leather knee-cap, from which hung a bell. His face was in the shade, and could not be distinguished.

Meanwhile the goodman had taken off his cap, and was exclaiming, tremulously,—

“Ah! my God! how did you come here, Father Madeleine? How did you get in, O Lord? Did you fall from the sky? There is no doubt, if you ever do fall, you will fall from there. And what has happened to you? You have no cravat, you have no hat, you have no coat? Do you know that you would have frightened anybody who did not know you? No coat? Merciful heavens! are the saints all crazy now? But how did you get in?”

One word did not wait for another. The old man spoke with a rustic volubility in which there was nothing disquieting. All this was said with a mixture of astonishment and frank good-nature.

“Who are you? and what is this house?” asked Jean Valjean.

“Oh! indeed, that is good, now,” exclaimed the old man. “I am the one you got the place for here, and this house is the one you got me the place in. What! you don’t remember me?”

“No,” said Jean Valjean. “And how does it happen that you know me?”

“You saved my life!” said the man.

He turned, a ray of the moon lighted up his side-face, and Jean Valjean recognized old Fauchelevent.

“Ah!” said Jean Valjean, “it is you! yes, I remember you.”

"That is very fortunate!" said the old man, in a reproachful tone.

"And what are you doing here?" added Jean Valjean.

"Oh! I am covering my melons."

Old Fauchelevent had in his hand, indeed, at the moment when Jean Valjean accosted him, the end of a piece of awning, which he was stretching out over the melon patch. He had already spread out several in this way during the hour he had been in the garden. It was this work which made him go through the peculiar motions observed by Jean Valjean from the shed.

He continued,—

"I said to myself—'The moon is bright, there is going to be a frost. Suppose I put their jackets on my melons?' And," added he, looking at Jean Valjean, with a loud laugh, "you would have done well to do as much for yourself. But how did you come here?"

Jean Valjean, finding that he was known by this man, at least under his name of Madeleine, went no further with his precautions. He multiplied questions. Oddly enough their parts seemed reversed. It was he, the intruder, who put questions.

"And what is this bell you have on your knee?"

"That?" answered Fauchelevent, "that is so that they may keep away from me."

"How! keep away from you?"

Old Fauchelevent winked in an indescribable manner.

"Ah, bless me! there's nothing but women in this house—plenty of young girls. It seems that I am dangerous to meet. The bell warns them. When I come they go away."

"What is this house?"

"Why, you know very well."

"No, I don't."

"Why, you got me this place here as gardener."

"Answer me as if I didn't know."

"Well, it is the Convent of the Petit Picpus, then."

Jean Valjean remembered. Chance—that is to say, Providence—had thrown him precisely into this convent of the Quartier Saint Antoine, to which old Fauchelevent, crippled by his fall from his cart, had been admitted, upon his recommendation, two years before. He repeated, as if he were talking to himself,—

"The Convent of the Petit Picpus!"

"But now, really," resumed Fauchelevent, "how the deuce did you manage to get in, you, Father Madeleine? It is no use for you to be a saint, you are a man; and no men come in here."

"But you are here."

"There is none but me."

"But," resumed Jean Valjean, "I must stay here."

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Fauchelevent.

Jean Valjean approached the old man, and said to him in a grave voice,—

"Father Fauchelevent, I saved your life."

"I was first to remember it," answered Fauchelevent.

"Well, you can now do for me what I once did for you."

Fauchelevent grasped in his old wrinkled and trembling hands the robust hands of Jean Valjean, and it was some seconds before he could speak; at last he exclaimed,—

"Oh! that would be a blessing of God if I could do something for you in return for that. I save your life! Monsieur Mayor, the old man is at your disposal."

A wonderful joy had, as it were, transfigured the old gardener. A radiance seemed to shine forth from his face.

"What do you want me to do?" added he.

"I will explain. You have a room?"

"I have a solitary shanty, over there, behind the ruins of the old convent, in a corner that nobody ever sees. There are three rooms."

The shanty was in fact so well concealed behind the ruins, and so well arranged that no one should see it, that Jean Valjean had not seen it.

"Good," said Jean Valjean. "Now I ask of you two things."

"What are they, Monsieur Mayor?"

"First, that you will not tell anybody what you know about me. Second, that you will not attempt to learn anything more."

"As you please. I know that you can do nothing dishonourable, and that you have always been a man of God. And then, besides, it was you that put me here. It is your place, I am yours."

"Very well. But now come with me. We will go for the child."

"Ah!" said Fauchelevent, "there is a child!"

He said not a word more, but followed Jean Valjean as a dog follows his master.

In half an hour Cosette, again become rosy before a good fire, was asleep in the old gardener's bed. Jean Valjean had put on his cravat and coat; his hat, which he had thrown over the wall, had been found and brought in. While Jean Valjean was putting on his coat, Fauchelevent had taken off his knee-cap with the bell attached, which now, hanging on a nail near a shutter, decorated the wall. The two men were warming themselves, with their elbows on a table, on which Fauchelevent had set a piece of cheese, some brown bread, a bottle of wine, and two glasses, and the old man said to Jean Valjean, putting his hand on his knee,—

"Ah! Father Madeleine, you didn't know me at first? You save people's lives and then you forget them? Oh! that's bad; they remember **you**. You are ungrateful!"

X.

THE events, the reverse of which, so to speak, we have just seen, had been brought about under the simplest conditions.

When Jean Valjean, on the night of the very day that Javert arrested him at the death-bed of Fantine, escaped from the municipal prison of M—— sur M——, the police supposed that the escaped convict would start for Paris. Paris is a maelstrom in which everything is lost; and everything disappears in this whirlpool of the world as in the whirlpool of the sea. No forest conceals a man like this multitude. Fugitives of all kinds know this. They go to Paris to be swallowed up; there are swallowings-up which save. The police know it also, and it is in Paris that they search for what they have lost elsewhere. They searched there for the ex-mayor of M—— sur M——. Javert was summoned to Paris to aid in the investigation. Javert, in fact, was of great aid in the recapture of Jean Valjean. The zeal and intelligence of Javert on this occasion were remarked by M. Chabouillet, Secretary of the Prefecture under Count Angles. M. Chabouillet, who had already interested himself in Javert, secured the transfer of the inspector of M—— sur M—— to the Police of Paris. There Javert rendered himself in various ways, and, let us say, although the word seems unusual for such service, honourably, useful.

He thought no more of Jean Valjean—with these hounds always upon the scent, the wolf of to-day banishes the memory of the wolf of yesterday—when, in December, 1823, he read a newspaper—he who never read the newspapers; but Javert, as a monarchist, made a point of knowing the details of the triumphal entry of the “Prince

generalissimo" into Bayonne. Just as he finished the article which interested him, a name—the name of Jean Valjean—at the bottom of the page attracted his attention. The newspaper announced that the convict Jean Valjean was dead, and published the fact in terms so explicit, that Javert had no doubt of it. He merely said, "*That settles it.*" Then he threw aside the paper, and thought no more of it.

Some time afterwards it happened that a police notice was transmitted by the Prefecture of Seine-et-Oise to the Prefecture of Police of Paris in relation to the kidnapping of a child, which had taken place, it was said, under peculiar circumstances, in the commune of Montfermeil. A little girl, seven or eight years old, the notice said, who had been confided by her mother to an innkeeper of the country, had been stolen by an unknown man; this little girl answered to the name of Cosette, and was the child of a young woman named Fantine, who had died at the hospital, nobody knew when or where. This notice came under the eyes of Javert, and set him to thinking.

The name of Fantine was well known to him. He remembered that Jean Valjean had actually made him—Javert—laugh aloud by asking of him a respite of three days, in order to go for the child of this creature. He recalled the fact that Jean Valjean had been arrested at Paris at the moment he was getting into the Montfermeil diligence. Some indications had even led him to think then that it was the second time that he was entering this diligence, and that he had already, the night previous, made another excursion to the environs of this village, for he had not been seen in the village itself. What was he doing in this region of Montfermeil? Nobody could divine. Javert understood it. The daughter of Fantine was there. Jean Valjean was going after her. Now this child had been stolen by an unknown man! Who could this man

be? Could it be Jean Valjean? But Jean Valjean was dead. Javert, without saying a word to any one, took the diligence at the Plat d'Étain, Cul-de-sac de Planchette, and took a trip to Montfermeil.

He expected to find great developments there; he found great obscurity.

For the first few days the Thénardiens, in their spite, had blabbed the story about. The disappearance of the Lark had made some noise in the village. There were soon several versions of the story, which ended by becoming a case of kidnapping. Hence the police notice. However, when the first ebullition was over, Thénardier, with admirable instinct, very soon arrived at the conclusion that it is never useful to set in motion the Procureur du Roi; that the first result of his complaints in regard to the *kidnapping* of Cosette would be to fix upon himself, and on many business troubles which he had, the keen eye of justice. The last thing that owls wish is a candle. And first of all, how should he explain the fifteen hundred francs he had received? He stopped short, and enjoined secrecy upon his wife, and professed to be astonished when anybody spoke to him of the *stolen child*. He knew nothing about it; undoubtedly he had made some complaint at the time that the dear little girl should be "taken away" so suddenly; he would have liked, for affection's sake, to keep her two or three days; but it was her "grandfather" who had come for her—the most natural thing in the world. He had added the grandfather, which sounded well. It was upon this story that Javert fell on reaching Montfermeil. The grandfather put Jean Valjean out of the question.

Javert, however, dropped a few questions, like plummets, into Thénardier's story. Who was this grandfather, and what was his name? Thénardier answered with simplicity, "He is a rich farmer; I saw his passport. I believe his name is M. Guillaume Lambert."

Lambert is a very respectable, reassuring name. Javert returned to Paris.

"Jean Valjean is really dead," said he, "and I am a fool."

He had begun to forget all this story when, in the month of March, 1824, he heard an odd person spoken of, who lived in the parish of Saint Médard, and who was called "the beggar who gives alms." This person was, it was said, a man living on his income, whose name nobody knew exactly, and who lived alone with a little girl eight years old, who knew nothing of herself except that she came from Montfermeil. Montfermeil! This name, constantly recurring, excited Javert's attention anew. An old begging police spy, formerly a beadle, to whom this person had extended his charity, added some other details. "This man was very unsociable, never going out except at night, speaking to nobody, except to the poor sometimes, and allowing nobody to get acquainted with him. He wore a horrible old yellow coat which was worth millions, being lined all over with bank bills." This decidedly piqued Javert's curiosity. That he might get a near view of this fantastic rich man without frightening him away, he borrowed one day of the beadle his old frock, and the place where the old spy squatted every night, droning out his orisons and playing the spy as he prayed.

"The suspicious individual" did indeed come to Javert thus disguised, and gave him alms; at that moment Javert raised his head, and the shock which Jean Valjean received, thinking that he recognized Javert, Javert received, thinking that he recognized Jean Valjean.

However, the obscurity might have deceived him, the death of Jean Valjean was officially certified; Javert had still serious doubts: and in case of doubt, Javert, scrupulous as he was, never seized any man by the collar.

He followed the old man to Gorbeau House, and set

"the old woman" talking, which was not at all difficult. The old woman confirmed the story of the coat lined with millions, and related to him the episode of the thousand-franc note. She had seen it ! she had touched it ! Javert hired a room. That very night he installed himself in it. He listened at the door of the mysterious lodger, hoping to hear the sound of his voice, but Jean Valjean perceived his candle through the key-hole and balked the spy by keeping silence.

The next day Jean Valjean decamped. But the noise of the five-franc piece which he dropped was noticed by the old woman, who, hearing money moving, suspected that he was going to move, and hastened to forewarn Javert. At night, when Jean Valjean went out, Javert was waiting for him behind the trees of the boulevard with two men.

Javert had called for assistance from the Prefecture, but he had not given the name of the person he hoped to seize. That was his secret ; and he kept it for three reasons ; first, because the least indiscretion might give the alarm to Jean Valjean ; next, because the arrest of an old escaped convict who was reputed dead, a criminal whom the records of justice had already classed for ever *among malefactors of the most dangerous kind*, would be a magnificent success, which the old members of the Parisian police certainly would never leave to a new-comer like Javert, and he feared they would take his galley-slave away from him ; finally, because Javert, being an artist, had a liking for surprises. He hated these boasted successes which are deflowered by talking of them in long advance. He liked to elaborate his masterpieces in the shade, and then to unveil them suddenly afterwards.

Javert had followed Jean Valjean from tree to tree, then from street-corner to street-corner, and had not lost sight of him a single instant ; even in the moments when Jean Valjean felt himself most secure, the eye of Javert was upon

him. Why did not Javert arrest Jean Valjean? Because he was still in doubt.

It must be remembered that at that time the police was not exactly at its ease ; it was cramped by a free press. Some arbitrary arrests, denounced by the newspapers, had been re-echoed even in the Chambers, and rendered the Prefecture timid. To attack individual liberty was a serious thing. The officers were afraid of making mistakes ; the Prefect held them responsible ; an error was the loss of their place. Imagine the effect which this brief paragraph, repeated in twenty papers, would have produced in Paris. "Yesterday, an old white-haired grandsire, a respectable person living on his income, who was taking a walk with his granddaughter, eight years old, was arrested and taken to the Station of the Prefecture as an escaped convict !"

Let us say, in addition, that Javert had his own personal scruples ; the injunctions of his conscience were added to the injunctions of the Prefect. He was really in doubt.

Jean Valjean turned his back, and walked away in the darkness.

Sadness, trouble, anxiety, weight of cares, this new sorrow of being obliged to fly by night, and to seek a chance asylum in Paris for Cosette and himself, the necessity of adapting his pace to the pace of a child, all this, without his knowing it even, had changed Jean Valjean's gait, and impressed upon his carriage such an appearance of old age that the police itself, incarnated in Javert, could be deceived. The impossibility of approaching too near, his dress of an old Preceptor of the Emigration, the declaration of Thénardier, who made him a grandfather ; finally, the belief in his death at the galleys, added yet more to the uncertainty which was increasing in Javert's mind.

For a moment he had an idea of asking him abruptly for his papers. But if the man were not Jean Valjean, and if the man were not a good old honest man of means, he was

probably some sharper, profoundly and skilfully adept in the obscure web of Parisian crime, some dangerous chief of bandits, giving alms to conceal his other talents, an old trick. He had comrades, accomplices, retreats on all hands, in which he would take refuge without doubt. All these windings which he was making in the streets seemed to indicate that he was not a simple honest man. To arrest him too soon would be "to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs." What inconvenience was there in waiting? Javert was very sure that he would not escape.

He walked on, therefore, in some perplexity, questioning himself continually in regard to this mysterious personage.

It was not until quite late, in the Rue de Pontoise, that, thanks to the bright light which streamed from a bar-room, he decidedly recognized Jean Valjean.

There are in this world two beings who can be deeply thrilled—the mother who finds her child, and the tiger who finds his prey. Javert felt this profound thrill.

As soon as he had positively recognized Jean Valjean, the formidable convict, he perceived that there were only three of them, and sent to the commissary of police, of the Rue de Pontoise, for additional aid. Before grasping a thorny stick, men put on gloves.

This delay, and stopping at the Rollin Square to arrange with his men, made him lose the scent. However, he had very soon guessed that Jean Valjean's first wish would be to put the river between his pursuers and himself. He bowed his head, and reflected, like a hound who puts his nose to the ground to be sure of the way. Javert, with his straightforward power of instinct, went directly to the bridge of Austerlitz. A word to the toll-keeper set him right. "Have you seen a man with a little girl?" "I made him pay two sous," answered the tollman. Javert reached the bridge in time to see Jean Valjean on the

other side of the river leading Cosette across the space lighted by the moon. He saw him enter the Rue de Chemin Vert Saint Antoine, he thought of the Cul-de-sac Genrot placed there like a trap, and of the only outlet from the Rue Droit Mur into the Petite Rue Picpus. He *put out beaters*, as hunters say; he sent one of his men hastily by a detour to guard that outlet. A patrol passing, on its return to the station at the Arsenal, he put it in requisition, and took it along with him. In such games soldiers are trumps. Moreover, it is a maxim that, to take the boar requires the science of the hunter and the strength of the dogs. These combinations being effected, feeling that Jean Valjean was caught between the Cul-de-sac Genrot on the right, his officer on the left, and himself, Javert, in the rear, he took a pinch of snuff.

Then he began to play. He enjoyed a ravishing and infernal moment; he let his man go before him, knowing that he had him, but desiring to put off as long as possible the moment of arresting him, delighting to feel that he was caught, and to set him free, fondly gazing upon him with the rapture of the spider which lets the fly buzz, or the cat which lets the mouse run. The paw and the talon find a monstrous pleasure in the quivering of the animal imprisoned in their grasp. What delight there is in this suffocation!

Javert was rejoicing. The links of his chain were solidly welded. He was sure of success; he had now only to close his hand.

Accompanied as he was, the very idea of resistance was impossible, however energetic, however vigorous, and however desperate Jean Valjean might be.

Javert advanced slowly, sounding and ransacking on his way all the recesses of the street as he would the pockets of a thief.

When he reached the centre of the web, the fly was no longer there.

Imagine his exasperation.

It is certain that Napoleon blundered in the campaign in Russia, and that Javert blundered in this campaign against Jean Valjean. He did wrong, perhaps, in hesitating to recognize the old galley-slave. The first glance should have been enough for him. He did wrong in not seizing him without ceremony in the old building. He did wrong in not arresting him when he positively recognized him in the Rue de Pontoise. He did wrong to hold a council with his aids, in full moonlight, in the Rollin Square. Certainly advice is useful, and it is well to know and to question those of the dogs which are worthy of credit; but the hunter cannot take too many precautions when he is chasing restless animals like the wolf and the convict. Javert, by too much forethought, in setting his bloodhounds on the track, alarmed his prey by giving him wind of the pursuit, and allowed him the start. He did wrong, above all, when he had regained the scent at the bridge of Austerlitz, to play the formidable and puerile game of holding such a man at the end of a thread. He thought himself stronger than he was, and believed he could play mouse with a lion. At the same time, he esteemed himself too weak when he deemed it necessary to obtain a reinforcement. Fatal precaution! loss of precious time! Javert made all these blunders, and yet he was none the less one of the wisest and most correct detectives that ever existed. He was, in the full force of the term, what in venery is called a *gentle dog*. But who is perfect?

Even at the moment when he perceived that Jean Valjean had escaped him, Javert did not lose his presence of mind. Sure that the convict who had broken his ban could not be far away, he set watches, arranged traps and

ambushes, and beat the quarter the night through. The first thing that he saw was the displacement of the lamp, the rope of which was cut. Precious indication, which led him astray, however, by directing all his researches towards the Cul-de-sac Genrot. There are in that cul-de-sac some rather low walls which face upon gardens, the limits of which extend to some very large uncultivated grounds. Jean Valjean evidently must have fled that way. The fact is that, if he had penetrated into the Cul-de-sac Genrot a little further, he would have done so, and would have been lost. Javert explored these gardens and these grounds, as if he were searching for a needle.

At daybreak, he left two intelligent men on the watch, and returned to the Prefecture of Police, crestfallen as a spy who has been caught by a thief.





Book Fifth

THE CONVENT OF PETIT PICPUS

I.

NOTHING resembled more closely, half a century ago, the commonest gateway of the time than the gateway of No. 62, Petite Rue Picpus. This door was usually half open in the most attractive manner, disclosing two things which have nothing very funereal about them—a court surrounded with walls bedecked with vines, and the face of a lounging porter. Above the rear wall large trees could be seen. When a beam of sunshine enlivened the court, when a glass of wine enlivened the porter, it was difficult to pass by No. 62, Petite Rue Picpus, without carrying away a pleasant idea. It was, however, a gloomy place of which you had had a glimpse.

The door smiled ; the house prayed and wept.

If you succeeded, which was not easy, in passing the porter—which for almost everybody was even impossible, for there was an *open sesame* which you must know ;—if, having passed the porter, you entered on the right a little vestibule which led to a stairway shut in between two walls,

and so narrow that but one person could pass at a time ; if you did not allow yourself to be frightened by the yellow wall-paper with the chocolate surbase that extended along the stairs, if you ventured to go up, you passed by a first broad stair, then a second, and reached the second story in a hall where the yellow hue and the chocolate plinth followed you with a peaceful persistency. Staircase and hall were lighted by two handsome windows. The hall made a sudden turn and became dark. If you doubled that cape, you came, in a few steps, to a door, all the more mysterious that it was not quite closed. You pushed it open, and found yourself in a little room about six feet square, the floor tiled, scoured, neat and cold, and the walls hung with fifteen-cent paper, nankeen-coloured paper with green flowers. A dull white light came from a large window with small panes which was at the left, and which took up the whole width of the room. You looked, you saw no one ; you listened, you heard no step, and no human sound. The wall was bare ; the room had no furniture, not even a chair.

You looked again, and you saw in the wall opposite the door a quadrangular opening about a foot square, covered with a grate of iron bars crossing one another, black, knotted, solid, which formed squares, I had almost said meshes, less than an inch across. The little green flowers on the nankeen paper came calmly and in order to these iron bars, without being frightened or scattered by the dismal contact. In case any living being had been so marvellously slender as to attempt to get in or out by the square hole, this grate would have prevented it. It did not let the body pass, but it did let the eyes pass—that is to say, the mind. This seemed to have been cared for, for it had been doubled by a sheet of tin inserted in the wall a little behind it, and pierced with a thousand holes more microscopic than those of a skimmer. At the bottom of this plate there was an opening cut exactly like the mouth of a

letter-box. A piece of broad tape attached to a bell hung at the right of the grated opening.

If you pulled this tape, a bell tinkled, and a voice was heard, very near you, which startled you.

"Who is there?" asked the voice.

It was a woman's voice, a gentle voice, so gentle that it was mournful.

Here again there was a magic word which you must know. If you did not know it, the voice was heard no more, and the wall again became silent, as if the wild obscurity of the sepulchre had been on the other side.

If you knew the word, the voice added,—

"Enter at the right."

You then noticed at your right, opposite the window, a glazed door surmounted by a glazed sash, and painted grey. You lifted the latch, you passed through the door, and you felt exactly the same impression as when you enter a grated box at the theatre before the grate is lowered and the lights are lit. You were, in fact, in a sort of theatre box, hardly made visible by the dim light of the glass door, narrow, furnished with two old chairs and a piece of tattered straw matting—a genuine box, with its front to lean upon, upon which was a tablet of black wood. This box was grated, but it was not a grate of gilded wood as at the Opera; it was a monstrous trellis of iron bars frightfully tangled together, and bolted to the wall by enormous bolts which resembled clenched fists.

After a few minutes, when your eyes began to get accustomed to this cavernous light, you tried to look through the grate, but could not see more than six inches beyond. There you saw a barrier of black shutters, secured and strengthened by wooden cross-bars painted gingerbread colour. These shutters were jointed, divided into long slender strips, and covered the whole length of the grate. They were always closed.

In a few moments you heard a voice calling to you from behind these shutters and saying,—

“I am here. What do you want of me?”

It was a loved voice, perhaps sometimes an adored one. You saw nobody. You hardly heard a breath. It seemed as if it were a ghostly voice speaking to you across the portal of the tomb.

If you appeared under certain necessary conditions, very rare, the narrow strip of one of these shutters opened in front of you, and the ghostly voice became an apparition. Behind the grate, behind the shutter, you perceived, as well as the grate permitted, a head, of which you saw only the mouth and chin; the rest was covered with a black veil. You caught a glimpse of a black guimpe and an ill-defined form covered with a black shroud. This head spoke to you. but did not look at you, and never smiled at you.

The light which came from behind you was disposed in such wise that you saw her in the light, and she saw you in the shade. This light was symbolic.

Meantime your eyes gazed eagerly through this aperture thus opened, into this place closed against all observation.

A deep obscurity enveloped this form thus clad in mourning. Your eyes strained into this obscurity, and sought to distinguish what was about the apparition. In a little while you perceived that you saw nothing. What you saw was night, void, darkness, a wintry mist mingled with a sepulchral vapour, a sort of terrifying quiet, a silence from which you distinguished nothing, not even sighs—a shade in which you discerned nothing, not even phantoms.

What you saw was the interior of a cloister.

It was the interior of that stern and gloomy house that was called the convent of the Bernardines of the Perpetual Adoration. This box where you were was the parlour. This voice, the first that spoke to you, was the voice of the portress, who was always seated, motionless and silent, on the

other side of the wall, near the square aperture, defended by the iron grate and the plate with the thousand holes as by a double visor.

The obscurity in which the grated box was sunk arose from this, that the locutory, which had a window on the side towards the outside world, had none on the convent side. Profane eyes must see nothing of this sacred place.

This convent, which in 1824 had existed for long years in the Petite Rue Picpus, was a community of Bernardines of the Obedience of Martin Verga.

The prioress is elected for three years by the mothers, who are called *vocal mothers*, because they have a voice in the chapter. A prioress can be re-elected but twice, which fixes the longest possible reign of a prioress at nine years.

They never see the officiating priest, who is always concealed from them by a woollen curtain nine feet high. During sermon, when the preacher is in the chapel, they drop their veil over their face; they must always speak low, walk with their eyes on the ground and their head bowed down. But one man can enter the convent, the archbishop of the diocese.

There is indeed one other, the gardener; but he is always an old man, and in order that he may be perpetually alone in the garden, and that the nuns may be warned to avoid him, a bell is attached to his knee.

The nuns were severe only to themselves. The only fires were in the school building, and the fare, compared with that of the convent, was choice.

The rule of silence prevailed throughout, and in the whole convent speech was withdrawn from human creatures and given to inanimate objects. Sometimes it was the church-bell that spoke, sometimes the gardener's. A very sonorous bell, placed beside the portress, and which was heard all over the house, indicated by its variations, which were a kind of acoustic telegraph, all the acts of material life to be

performed, and called to the locutory, if need were, this or that inhabitant of the house. Each person and each thing had its special ring.

The convent of the Petit Picpus Saint Antoine almost entirely filled the large trapezium which was formed by the intersection of the Rue Polonceau, the Rue Droit Mur, the Petite Rue Picpus, and the built-up alley called in the old plans Rue Aumarais. These four streets surrounded this trapezium like a ditch. The convent was composed of several buildings and a garden. The principal building, taken as a whole, was an aggregation of hybrid constructions which, in a bird's-eye view, presented with considerable accuracy the form of a gibbet laid down on the ground.

The long arm of the gibbet extended along the whole portion of the Rue Droit Mur comprised between the Petite Rue Picpus and the Rue Polonceau; the short arm was a high, grey, severe, grated façade which overlooked the Petite Rue Picpus; the gateway, No. 62, marked the end of it. Towards the middle of this façade, the dust and ashes had whitened an old low arched door where the spiders made their webs, and which was opened only for an hour or two on Sunday and on the rare occasions when the corpse of a nun was taken out of the convent. It was the public entrance of the church. The elbow of the gibbet was a square hall which served as pantry, and which the nuns called *the expense*. In the long arm were the cells of the mothers, sisters, and novices. In the short arm were the kitchens, the refectory, lined with cells, and the church. Between the door, No. 62, and the corner of the closed alley Aumarais, was the school, which could not be seen from the outside. The rest of the trapezium formed the garden, which was much lower than the level of the Rue Polonceau; so that the walls were considerably higher on the inside than on the outside. The garden, which was

slightly convex, had in the centre, on the top of a knoll, a beautiful fir, pointed and conical, from which parted, as from the centre of a buckler, four broad walks, and, arranged two by two, between the broad walks, eight narrow ones, so that, if the inclosure had been circular, the geometrical plan of the walks would have resembled a cross placed over a wheel. The walks, all extending to the very irregular walls of the garden, were of unequal length. They were bordered with gooseberry bushes. At the further end of the garden a row of large poplars extended from the ruins of the old convent, which was at the corner of the Rue Droit Mur, to the house of the Little Convent, which was at the corner of the alley Aumarais. Before the Little Convent was what was called the Little Garden. Add to this outline a courtyard, all manner of angles made by detached buildings, prison walls, no prospect, and no neighbourhood but the long black line of roofs which ran along the other side of the Rue Polonceau, and you can form a complete image of what was, forty-five years ago, the house of the Bernardines of the Petit Picpus. This holy house had been built on the exact site of a famous tennis-court, which existed from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, and which was called the *court of the eleven thousand devils*.

All these streets, moreover, were among the most ancient in Paris. These names, Droit Mur and Aumarais, are very old; the streets which bear them are much older still. The alley Aumarais was called the alley Maugout; the Rue Droit Mur was called the Rue des Églantiers, for God opened the flowers before man cut stone.

II.

INTO this place it was that Jean Valjean had, as Fauchelevent said, "fallen from heaven."

He had crossed the garden wall at the corner of the Rue Polonceau. That angels' hymn which he had heard in the middle of the night was the nuns chanting matins; that hall of which he had caught a glimpse in the obscurity was the chapel; that phantom which he had seen extended on the floor was the sister performing the reparation; that bell the sound of which had so strangely surprised him was the gardener's bell fastened to old Fauchelevent's knee.

When Cosette had been put to bed, Jean Valjean and Fauchelevent had, as we have seen, taken a glass of wine and a piece of cheese before a blazing fire; then, the only bed in the shanty being occupied by Cosette, they had thrown themselves each upon a bundle of straw. Before closing his eyes, Jean Valjean had said, "Henceforth I must remain here." These words were chasing one another through Fauchelevent's head the whole night.

To tell the truth, neither of them had slept.

Jean Valjean, feeling that he was discovered, and Javert was upon his track, knew full well that he and Cosette were lost should they return into the city. Since the new blast which had burst upon him had thrown him into this cloister, Jean Valjean had but one thought—to remain there. Now, for one in his unfortunate position, this convent was at once the safest and the most dangerous place; the most dangerous, for, no man being allowed to enter, if he should be discovered, it was a flagrant crime, and Jean Valjean would take but one step from the convent to prison; the safest, for, if he succeeded in getting permission to remain,

who would come there to look for him? To live in an impossible place—that would be safety.

For his part, Fauchelevent was racking his brains. He began by deciding that he was utterly bewildered. How did Monsieur Madeleine come there, with such walls! The walls of a cloister are not so easily crossed. How did he happen to be with a child? A man does not scale a steep wall with a child in his arms. Who was this child? Where did they both come from? Since Fauchelevent had been in the convent, he had not heard a word from M—— sur M——, and he knew nothing of what had taken place. Father Madeleine wore that air which discourages questions; and, moreover, Fauchelevent said to himself, "One does not question a saint." To him Monsieur Madeleine had preserved all his prestige. From some words that escaped from Jean Valjean, however, the gardener thought he might conclude that Monsieur Madeleine had probably failed on account of the hard times, and that he was pursued by his creditors; or it might be that he was compromised in some political affair, and was concealing himself, which did not at all displease Fauchelevent, who, like many of our peasants of the north, had an old Bonapartist heart. Being in concealment, Monsieur Madeleine had taken the convent for an asylum, and it was natural that he should wish to remain there. But the mystery to which Fauchelevent constantly returned, and over which he was racking his brains, was that Monsieur Madeleine should be there, and that this little girl should be with him. Fauchelevent saw them, touched them, spoke to them, and yet did not believe it. An incomprehensibility had made its way into Fauchelevent's hut. Fauchelevent was groping amid conjectures, but saw nothing clearly except this, "Monsieur Madeleine has saved my life." This single certainty was sufficient, and determined him. He said aside to himself, "It is my turn now." He added in his conscience, "Monsieur

Madeleine did not deliberate so long when the question was about squeezing himself under the waggon to draw me out." He decided that he would save Monsieur Madeleine.

He, however, put several questions to himself, and made several answers:—"After what he has done for me, if he were a thief, would I save him?—Just the same. If he were an assassin, would I save him?—Just the same. Since he is a saint, shall I save him?—Just the same."

But to have him remain in the convent, what a problem was that! Before that almost chimerical attempt Fauchelevent did not recoil; this poor Picardy peasant, with no other ladder than his devotion, his goodwill, a little of that old country cunning, engaged for once in the service of a generous intention, undertook to scale the impossibilities of the cloister and the craggy escarpments of the rules of St. Benedict. Fauchelevent was an old man who had been selfish throughout his life, and who, near the end of his days, crippled, infirm, having no interest longer in the world, found it sweet to be grateful, and seeing a virtuous action to be done, threw himself into it like a man who, at the moment of death, finding at hand a glass of some good wine which he had never tasted, should drink it greedily. We might add that the air which he had been breathing now for several years in this convent had destroyed his personality, and had at last rendered some good action necessary to him.

He formed his resolution then—to devote himself to Monsieur Madeleine.

We have just described him as a *poor Picardy peasant*. The description is true, but incomplete. At the point of this story at which we now are, a closer acquaintance with Fauchelevent becomes necessary. He was a peasant, but he had been a notary, which added craft to his cunning, and penetration to his simplicity. Having, from various causes, failed in his business, from a notary he had fallen to

a cartman and labourer. But, in spite of the oaths and blows which seem necessary with horses, he had retained something of the notary. He had some natural wit ; he said neither "I is" nor "I has ;" he could carry on a conversation—a rare thing in a village ; and the other peasants said of him, "He talks almost like a gentleman." Fauchelevant belonged, in fact, to that class which the flippant and impertinent vocabulary of the last century termed *half-yeoman, half-clown* ; and which the metaphors falling from the castle to the hovel label, in the distribution of the commonalty, *half-rustic, half-citizen, pepper-and-salt*. Fauchelevant, although sorely tried and sorely used by Fortune—a sort of poor old soul worn thread-bare—was nevertheless an impulsive man, and had a very willing heart ; a precious quality, which prevents one from ever being wicked. His faults and his vices, for such he had, were superficial ; and, finally, his physiognomy was one of those which attract the observer. That old face had none of those ugly wrinkles in the upper part of the forehead which indicate wickedness or stupidity.

At daybreak, having dreamed enormously, old Fauchelevant opened his eyes, and saw Monsieur Madeleine, who, seated upon his bunch of straw, was looking at Cosette as she slept. Fauchelevant half arose and said—

"Now that you are here, how are you going to manage to come in?"

This question summed up the situation, and wakened Jean Valjean from his reverie.

The two men took counsel.

"To begin with," said Fauchelevant, "you will not set foot outside of this room, neither the little girl nor you. One step in the garden, we are ruined."

"That is true."

"Monsieur Madeleine," resumed Fauchelevant, "you have arrived at a very good time—I mean to say very bad ;

there is one of these ladies dangerously sick. On that account they do not look this way much. She must be dying. They are saying the forty-hour prayers. The whole community is in derangement. That takes up their attention. She who is about departing is a saint. In fact, we are all saints here ; all the difference between them and me is, that they say 'our cell,' and I say 'my shanty.' They are going to have the orison for the dying, and then the orison for the dead. For to-day we shall be quiet here ; and I do not answer for to-morrow."

"However," observed Jean Valjean, "this shanty is under the corner of the wall ; it is hidden by a sort of ruin ; there are trees ; they cannot see it from the convent."

"And I add, that the nuns never come near it."

"Well?" said Jean Valjean.

The interrogation point which followed that "well" meant "It seems to me that we can remain here concealed." This interrogation point Fauchelevent answered,—

"There are the little girls."

"What little girls?" asked Jean Valjean.

As Fauchelevent opened his mouth to explain the words he had just uttered, a single stroke of a bell was heard.

"The nun is dead," said he ; "there is the knell."

And he motioned to Jean Valjean to listen.

The bell sounded a second time.

"It is the knell, Monsieur Madeleine. The bell will strike every minute, for twenty-four hours, until the body goes out of the church. You see they play. In their recreations, if a ball roll here, that is enough for them to come after it, in spite of the rules, and rummage all about here. Those cherubs are little devils."

"Who?" asked Jean Valjean.

"The little girls. You would be found out very soon. They would cry, 'What ! a man !' But there is no danger to-day. There will be no recreation. The day will be all

prayers. You hear the bell. As I told you, a stroke every minute. It is the knell."

"I understand, Father Fauchelevant. There are boarding scholars."

And Jean Valjean thought within himself,—

"Here, then, Cosette can be educated, too."

Fauchelevant exclaimed,—

"Zounds! they are the little girls for you! And how they would scream at sight of you! and how they would run! Here, to be a man, is to have the plague. You see how they fasten a bell to my leg, as they would to a wild beast."

Jean Valjean was studying more and more deeply. "This convent would save us," murmured he. Then he raised his voice,—

"Yes, the difficulty is in remaining."

"No," said Fauchelevant, "it is to get out."

Jean Valjean felt his blood run cold.

"To get out?"

"Yes, Monsieur Madeleine, in order to come in, it is necessary that you should get out."

And, after waiting for a sound from the tolling bell to die away, Fauchelevant pursued,—

"It would not do to have you found here like this. Whence do you come? For me, you have fallen from heaven, because I know you; but, for the nuns, you must come in at the door."

Suddenly they heard a complicated ringing upon another bell.

"Oh!" said Fauchelevant, "that is the ring for the mothers. They are going to the chapter. They always hold a chapter when anybody dies. She died at daybreak. It is usually at daybreak that people die. But cannot you go out the way you came in? Let us see; this is not to question you, but where did you come in?"

Jean Valjean became pale ; the bare idea of climbing down again into that formidable street made him shudder. Make your way out of a forest full of tigers, and, when out, fancy yourself advised by a friend to return. Jean Valjean imagined all the police still swarming in the quarter, officers on the watch, sentries everywhere, frightful fists stretched out towards his collar, Javert, perhaps, at the corner of the square.

"Impossible," said he. "Father Fauchelevent, let it go that I fell from on high."

"Ah ! I believe it, I believe it," replied Fauchelevent. "You have no need to tell me so. God must have taken you into his hand, to have a close look at you, and then put you down. Only he meant to put you into a monastery; he made a mistake. Hark ! another ring ; that is to warn the porter to go and notify the municipality, so that they may go and notify the death-physician, so that he may come and see that there is really a dead woman. All that is the ceremony of dying. These good ladies do not like this visit very much. A physician believes in nothing. He lifts the veil. He even lifts something else sometimes. How soon they have notified the inspector, this time ! What can be the matter ? Your little one is asleep yet. What is her name ?"

"Cosette."

"She is your girl—that is to say, you should be her grandfather ?"

"Yes."

"For her to get out will be easy. I have my door, which opens into the court. I knock ; the porter opens. I have my basket on my back ; the little girl is inside ; I go out. Father Fauchelevent goes out with his basket—that is all simple. You will tell the little girl to keep very still. She will be under cover. I will leave her, as soon as I can, with an old friend of mine, a fruiteress, in the Rue du Chemin

Vert, who is deaf, and who has a little bed. I will scream into the fruiteress's ear that she is my niece, and she must keep her for me till to-morrow. Then the little girl will come back with you—for I shall bring you back. It must be done. But how are you going to manage to get out?"

Jean Valjean shook his head.

"Let nobody see me, that is all, Father Fauchelevent. Find some means to get me out, like Cosette, in a basket, and under cover."

Fauchelevent scratched the tip of his ear with the middle finger of his left hand—a sign of serious embarrassment.

A third ring made a diversion.

"That is the death-physician going away," said Fauchelevent. "He has looked, and said, 'She is dead; it is right.' When the inspector has visé the passport for paradise, the undertaker sends a coffin. If it is a mother, the mothers lay her out; if it is a sister, the sisters lay her out. After which, I nail it up. That's a part of my gardening. A gardener is something of a gravedigger. They put her in a low room in the church which communicates with the street, and where no man can enter except the death-physician. I do not count the bearers and myself for men. In that room I nail the coffin. The bearers come and take her, and whip-up, driver: that is the way they go to heaven. They bring in a box with nothing in it, they carry it away with something inside. That is what an interment is. *De profundis.*"

A ray of the rising sun beamed upon the face of the sleeping Cosette, who half-opened her mouth dreamily, seeming like an angel drinking in the light. Jean Valjean was looking at her. He no longer heard Fauchelevent.

The brave old gardener quietly continued his garrulous rehearsal,—

"The grave is at the Vaugirard Cemetery. They pretend that this Vaugirard Cemetery is going to be suppressed. It

is an ancient cemetery, which is not according to the regulations, which does not wear the uniform, and which is going to be retired. I am sorry for it, for it is convenient. I have a friend there—Father Mestienne, the gravedigger. The nuns here have the privilege of being carried to that cemetery at nightfall. There is an order of the Préfecture expressly for them. But what events since yesterday? Mother Crucifixion is dead, and Father Madeleine——”

“Is buried,” said Jean Valjean, sadly smiling.

Fauchelevant echoed the word.

“Really, if you were here for good, it would be a genuine burial.”

A fourth time the bell rang out. Fauchelevant quickly took down the knee-piece and bell from the nail, and buckled it on his knee.

“This time it is for me. The mother prioress wants me. Well! I am pricking myself with the tongue of my buckle. Monsieur Madeleine, do not stir, but wait for me. There is something new. If you are hungry, there is the wine, and bread and cheese.”

And he went out of the hut, saying, “I am coming, I am coming.”

Jean Valjean saw him hasten across the garden, as fast as his crooked leg would let him, with side glances at his melons the while.

In less than ten minutes, Father Fauchelevant, whose bell put the nuns to flight as he went along, rapped softly at a door, and a gentle voice answered, “*Forever, Forever!*”—that is to say, “*Come in.*”

This door was that of the parlour allotted to the gardener, for use when it was necessary to communicate with him. This parlour was near the hall of the chapter. The prioress, seated in the only chair in the parlour, was waiting for Fauchelevant.

III.

A SERIOUS and troubled bearing is peculiar, on critical occasions, to certain characters and certain professions especially priests and monastics. At the moment when Fauchelevant entered, this double sign of pre-occupation marked the countenance of the prioress, the charming and learned Mademoiselle de Blemeur, Mother Innocent, who was ordinarily cheerful.

The gardener made a timid bow, and stopped at the threshold of the cell. The prioress, who was saying her rosary, raised her eyes and said,—

“Ah ! it is you, Father Fauvent.

This abbreviation had been adopted in the convent.

Fauchelevant again began his bow.

“Father Fauvent, I have called you.”

“I am here, reverend mother.”

“I wish to speak to you.”

“And I, for my part,” said Fauchelevant, with a boldness at which he was alarmed himself, “I have something to say to the most reverend mother.”

The prioress looked at him.

“Ah, you have a communication to make to me.”

“A petition !”

“Well, what is it ?”

Goodman Fauchelevant, ex-notary, belonged to that class of peasants who are never disconcerted. A certain combination of ignorance and skill is very effective ; you do not expect it, and you accede to it. Within little more than two years that he had lived in the convent, Fauchelevant had achieved a success in the community. Always alone, and even while attending to his garden, he had hardly anything to do but

to be curious. Being, as he was, at a distance from all these veiled women, going to and fro, he saw before him hardly more than a fluttering of shadows. By dint of attention and penetration, he had succeeded in clothing all these phantoms with flesh, and these dead were alive to him. He was like a deaf man whose sight is extended, and like a blind man whose hearing is sharpened. He had applied himself to unravelling the meaning of the various rings, and had made them out; so that in this enigmatic and taciturn cloister nothing was hidden from him; this sphinx blabbed all her secrets in his ear. Fauchelevant, knowing everything, concealed everything. That was his art. The whole convent thought him stupid—a great merit in religion. The mothers prized Fauchelevant. He was a rare mute. He inspired confidence. Moreover, he was regular in his habits, and never went out except when it was clearly necessary on account of the orchard and the garden. This discretion in his conduct was counted to his credit. He had, nevertheless, learned the secrets of two men—the porter of the convent, who knew the peculiarities of the parlour, and the grave-digger of the cemetery, who knew the singularities of burial: in this manner he had a double light in regard to these nuns—one upon their life, the other upon their death. But he did not abuse it. The congregation thought much of him, old, lame, seeing nothing, probably a little deaf—how many good qualities! It would have been difficult to replace him.

The goodman, with the assurance of one who feels that he is appreciated, began before the reverend prioress a rustic harangue, quite diffuse and very profound. He spoke at length of his age, his infirmities, of the weight of years henceforth doubly heavy upon him, of the growing demands of his work, of the size of the garden, of the nights to be spent, like last night for example, when he had to put awnings over the melons on account of the moon; and he

finally ended with this, "that he had a brother (the prioress gave a start)—a brother not young (second start of the prioress, but a re-assured start)—that if it was desired, this brother could come and live with him, and help him; that he was an excellent gardener; that the community would get good services from him, better than his own; that, otherwise, if his brother were not admitted, as he, the oldest, felt that he was broken down, and unequal to the labour, he would be obliged to leave, though with much regret; and that his brother had a little girl that he would bring with him, who would be reared under God in the house, and who, perhaps—who knows?—would some day become a nun."

When he had finished, the prioress stopped the sliding of her rosary through her fingers, and said,—

"Can you, between now and night, procure a strong iron bar?"

"For what work?"

"To be used as a lever."

"Yes, reverend mother," answered Fauchelevent.

The prioress, without adding a word, arose, and went into the next room, which was the hall of the chapter, where the vocal mothers were probably assembled. Fauchelevent remained alone.

IV.

ABOUT a quarter of an hour elapsed. The prioress returned and resumed her seat.

Both seemed pre-occupied. We report as well as we can the dialogue that followed:—

"Father Fauvent!"

"Reverend mother!"

"You are familiar with the chapel?"

"I have a little box there to go to mass, and the offices."

"And you have been in the choir about your work?"

"Two or three times."

"A stone is to be raised"

"Heavy?"

"The slab of the pavement at the side of the altar."

"The stone that covers the vault?"

"Yes."

"That is a piece of work where it would be well to have two men."

"Mother Ascension, who is as strong as a man, will help you."

"A woman is never a man."

"We have only a woman to help you. Everybody does what he can. Because Dom Mabillon gives four hundred and seventeen epistles of St. Bernard, and Merlonus Horstius gives only three hundred and sixty-seven, I do not despise Merlonus Horstius."

"Nor I either."

"Merit consists in work according to our strength. A cloister is not a ship-yard."

"And a woman is not a man. My brother is very strong."

"And then you will have a lever."

"That is the only kind of key that fits that kind of door."

"There is a ring in the stone."

"I will pass the lever through it."

"And the stone is arranged to turn on a pivot."

"Very well, reverend mother, I will open the vault."

"And the four mother choristers will assist you."

"And when the vault is opened?"

"It must be shut again."

"Is that all?"

"No."

"Give me your orders, most reverend mother."

"Fauvent, we have confidence in you."

"I am here to do everything."

"And to keep silent about everything."

"Yes, reverend mother."

"When the vault is opened——"

"I will shut it again."

"But before——"

"What, reverend mother?"

"Something must be let down."

There was silence. The prioress, after a quivering of the under-lip which resembled hesitation, spoke,—

"Father Fauvent?"

"Reverend mother?"

"You know that a mother died this morning."

"No."

"You have not heard the bell, then?"

"Nothing is heard at the further end of the garden."

"Really?"

"I can hardly distinguish my ring."

"She died at daybreak."

"And then, this morning, the wind didn't blow my way."

"It is Mother Crucifixion. One of the blest."

The prioress was silent, moved her lips a moment as in a mental orison, and resumed,—

"Three years ago, merely from having seen Mother Crucifixion at prayer, a Jansenist, Madame de Béthune, became orthodox."

"Ah! yes, I hear the knell now, reverend mother."

"The mothers have carried her into the room of the dead, which opens into the church."

"I know."

"No other man than you can or must enter that room. Be watchful. It would look well for a man to enter the room of the dead!"

"Often."

"Eh?"

"Often."

"What do you say?"

"I say often."

"Often than what?"

"Reverend mother, I don't say often than what; I say often."

"I do not understand you. Why do you say often?"

"To say as you do, reverend mother."

"But I did not say often."

"You did not say it; but I said it to say as you did."

The clock struck nine.

"At nine o'clock in the morning, and at all hours, praise and adoration to the most holy sacrament of the altar," said the prioress.

"Amen!" said Fauchelevant.

The clock struck in good time. It cut short that Often. It is probable that without it the prioress and Fauchelevant would never have got out of that snarl.

Fauchelevant wiped his forehead.

The prioress again made a little low murmur, probably sacred, then raised her voice,—

"During her life, Mother Crucifixion worked conversions; after her death, she will work miracles."

"She will!" answered Fauchelevant, correcting his step, and making an effort not to blunder again.

"Father Fauvent, the community has been blessed in Mother Crucifixion. Doubtless, it is not given to everybody to die like Cardinal de Bérulle, saying the holy mass, and to breathe out his soul to God, pronouncing these words: '*Hanc igitur oblationem.*' But without attaining to so great happiness, Mother Crucifixion had a very precious death. She had her consciousness to the last. She spoke to us, then she spoke to the angels. She gave us her last commands. If you had a little more faith, and if you could

have been in her cell, she would have cured your leg by touching it. She smiled. We felt that she was returning to life in God. There was something of Paradise in that death."

Fauchelevant thought that he had been listening to a prayer.

"Amen!" said he.

"Father Fauvent, we must do what the dead wish."

The prioress counted a few beads on her chaplet. Fauchelevant was silent. She continued,—

"I have consulted upon this question several ecclesiastics labouring in Our Lord, who are engaged in the exercise of clerical functions, and with admirable results."

"Reverend mother, we hear the knell much better here than in the garden."

"Furthermore, she is more than a departed one; she is a saint."

"Like you, reverend mother."

"She slept in her coffin for twenty years, by the express permission of our Holy Father, Pius VII."

"He who crowned the Emp—— Buonaparte."

For a shrewd man like Fauchelevant the reminiscence was untoward. Luckily the prioress, absorbed in her thoughts, did not hear him. She continued,—

"Father Fauvent?"

"Reverend mother?"

"St. Diodorus, Archbishop of Cappadocia, desired that this single word might be written upon his tomb—'*Acarus*, which signifies a worm or the dust: that was done. Is it true?"

"Yes, reverend mother."

"The blessed Mezzocane, Abbé of Aquila, desired to be buried under the gibbet: that was done."

"It is true."

"St. Terence, Bishop of Ostia, at the mouth of the

Tiber, requested to have engraved upon his tomb the mark which was put upon the graves of parricides, in the hope that travellers would spit upon his grave: that was done. We must obey the dead."

"So be it."

"The body of Bernard Guidonis, who was born in France, near Roche Abeille, was, as he had ordered, and in spite of the King of Castile, brought to the church of the Dominicans at Limoges, although Bernard Guidonis was Bishop of Tuy, in Spain. Can this be denied?"

The fact is attested by Plantavit de la Fosse.

"No, indeed, reverend mother."

A few beads of her chaplet were told over silently. The prioress went on,—

"Father Fauvent, Mother Crucifixion will be buried in the coffin in which she has slept for twenty years."

"That is right."

"It is a continuation of sleep."

"I shall have to nail her up, then, in that coffin?"

"Yes."

"And we will put aside the undertaker's coffin?"

"Precisely."

"I am at the disposal of the most reverend community."

"The four mother choristers will help you."

"To nail up the coffin I don't need them."

"No; to let it down."

"Where?"

"Into the vault."

"What vault?"

"Under the altar."

Fauchelevant gave a start.

"The vault under the altar!"

"Under the altar."

"But——"

"You will have an iron bar."

"Yes, but——"

"You will lift the stone with the bar by means of the ring."

"But——"

"We must obey the dead. To be buried in the vault under the altar of the chapel—not to go into profane ground—to remain in death where she prayed in life—this was the last request of Mother Crucifixion. She has asked it—that is to say, commanded it."

"But it is forbidden."

"Forbidden by men, enjoined by God."

"If it should come to be known?"

"We have confidence in you."

"Oh! as for me, I am like a stone in your wall."

"The chapter has assembled. The vocal mothers, whom I have just consulted again, and who are now deliberating, have decided that Mother Crucifixion should be, according to her desire, buried in her coffin under our altar. Think, Father Fauvent, if there should be miracles performed here! what glory under God for the community Miracles spring from tombs."

"But, reverend mother, if the agent of the Health Commission——"

"St. Benedict II., in the matter of burial, resisted Constantine Pogonatus."

"However, the Commissary of Police——"

"Chonodemaire, one of the seven German kings who entered Gaul in the reign of Constantius, expressly recognized the right of conventuals to be inhumed in religion—that is to say, under the altar."

"But the Inspector of the Préfecture——"

"The world is nothing before the cross. Martin eleventh general of the Carthusians, gave to his order this device: '*Stat crux dum volvitur orbis.*'"

"Amen," said Fauchelevent, imperturbable in this

method of extricating himself whenever he heard any Latin.

The prioress drew breath, then turning towards Fauchelevent,—

“Father Fauvent, is it settled?”

“It is settled, reverend mother.”

“Can we count upon you?”

“I shall obey.”

“It is well.”

“I am entirely devoted to the convent.”

“It is understood you will close the coffin. The sisters will carry it into the chapel. The office for the dead will be said. Then they will return to the cloister. Between eleven o'clock and midnight you will come with your iron bar. All will be done with the greatest secrecy. There will be in the chapel only the four mother choristers, Mother Ascension, and you.”

“And the sister who will be at the post.”

“She will not turn.”

“But she will hear.”

“She will not listen; moreover, what the cloister knows the world does not know.”

There was a pause again. The prioress continued,—

“You will take off your bell. It is needless that the sister at the post should perceive that you are there.”

“Reverend mother?”

“What, Father Fauvent?”

“Has the death-physician made his visit?”

“He is going to make it at four o'clock to-day. The bell has been sounded which summons the death-physician. But you do not hear any ring then?”

“I only pay attention to my own.”

“That is right, Father Fauvent.”

“Reverend mother, I shall need a lever at least six feet long.”

"Where will you get it?"

"Where there are gratings there are always iron bars. I have my heap of old iron at the back of the garden."

"About three-quarters of an hour before midnight; do not forget."

"Reverend mother."

"What?"

"If you should ever have any other work like this, my brother is very strong. A Turk."

"You will do it as quickly as possible."

"I cannot go very fast. I am infirm; it is on that account I need help. I limp."

"To limp is not a crime, and it may be a blessing. The Emperor Henry II., who fought the Antipope Gregory, and re-established Benedict VIII., has two surnames—the Saint and the Lame."

"Two surtouts are very good," murmured Fauchelevent, who, in reality, was a little hard of hearing.

"Father Fauvent, now I think of it, we will take a whole hour. It is not too much. Be at the high altar with the iron bar at eleven o'clock. The office commences at midnight. It must all be finished a good quarter of an hour before."

"I will do everything to prove my zeal for the community. This is the arrangement. I shall nail up the coffin. At eleven o'clock precisely I will be in the chapel. The mother choristers will be there, Mother Ascension will be there. Two men would be better. But no matter! I shall have my lever. We shall open the vault, let down the coffin, and close the vault again. After which there will be no trace of anything. The Government will suspect nothing. Reverend mother, is this all so?"

"No."

"What more is there, then?"

"There is still the empty coffin."

This brought them to a stand. Fauchelevent pondered. The prioress pondered.

"Father Fauvent, what shall be done with the coffin?"

"It will be put in the ground."

"Empty?"

Another silence. Fauchelevent made with his left hand that peculiar gesture which dismisses an unpleasant question.

"Reverend mother, I nail up the coffin in the lower room in the church, and nobody can come in there except me, and I will cover the coffin with the pall."

"Yes, but the bearers, in putting it into the hearse and in letting it down into the grave, will surely perceive that there is nothing inside."

"Ah! the de——!" exclaimed Fauchelevent.

The prioress began to cross herself, and looked fixedly at the gardener. "*Vil*" stuck in his throat.

He made haste to think of an expedient to make her forget the oath.

"Reverend mother, I will put some earth into the coffin. That will have the effect of a body."

"You are right. Earth is the same thing as man. So you will prepare the empty coffin?"

"I will attend to that."

The face of the prioress, till then dark and anxious, became again serene. She made him the sign of a superior dismissing an inferior. Fauchelevent moved towards the door. As he was going out, the prioress gently raised her voice,—

"Father Fauvent, I am satisfied with you; to-morrow, after the burial, bring **your** brother to me, and tell him to bring his daughter."

V.

THE strides of the lame are like the glances of the one-eyed ; they do not speedily reach their aim. Furthermore, Fauchelevent was perplexed. It took him nearly a quarter of an hour to get back to the shanty in the garden. Cosette was awake. Jean Valjean had seated her near the fire. At the moment when Fauchelevent entered, Jean Valjean was showing her the gardener's basket hanging on the wall and saying to her,—

“Listen attentively to me, my little Cosette. We must go away from this house, but we shall come back, and we shall be very well off here. The goodman here will carry you out on his back inside there. You will wait for me at a lady's. I shall come and find you. Above all, if you do not want the Thénardiess to take you back, obey and say nothing.”

Cosette nodded her head with a serious look.

At the sound of Fauchelevent opening the door, Jean Valjean turned.

“Well?”

“All is arranged, and nothing is,” said Fauchelevent. “I have permission to bring you in ; but, before bringing you in, it is necessary to get you out. That is where the cart is blocked ! For the little girl, it is easy enough.”

“You will carry her out?”

“And she will keep quiet?”

“I will answer for it.”

“But you, Father Madeleine?”

And, after an anxious silence, Fauchelevent exclaimed,—

“But why not go out the way you came in?”

Jean Valjean, as before, merely answered, “Impossible.”

Fauchelevent, talking more to himself than to Jean Valjean, grumbled,—

"There is another thing that torments me. I said I would put in some earth. But I think that earth inside, instead of a body, will not be like it; that will not do, it will shake about; it will move. The men will feel it. You understand, Father Madeleine, the Government will find it out."

Jean Valjean stared at him, and thought that he was raving.

Fauchelevant resumed,—

"How the d—ickens are you going to get out? For all this must be done to-morrow. To-morrow I am to bring you in. The prioress expects you."

Then he explained to Jean Valjean that this was a reward for a service that he, Fauchelevant, was rendering to the community. That it was a part of his duties to assist in burials, that he nailed up the coffins, and attended the grave-digger at the cemetery. That the nun who died that morning had requested to be buried in the coffin which she had used as a bed, and interred in the vault under the altar of the chapel. That this was forbidden by the regulations of the Police, but that she was one of those departed ones to whom nothing is refused. That the prioress and the vocal mothers intended to carry out the will of the deceased. So much the worse for the Government. That he, Fauchelevant, would nail up the coffin in the cell, raise the stone in the chapel, and let down the body into the vault. And that, in return for this, the prioress would admit his brother into the house as gardener, and his niece as boarder. That his brother was M. Madeleine, and that his niece was Cosette. That the prioress had told him to bring his brother the next evening, after the fictitious burial at the cemetery. But that he could not bring M. Madeleine from the outside, if M. Madeleine were not outside. That that was the first difficulty. And then that he had another difficulty—the empty coffin."

"What is the empty coffin?" asked Jean Valjean.

Fauchelevant responded,—

"The coffin from the administration."

"What coffin? and what administration?"

"A nun dies. The municipality physician comes and says, 'There is a nun dead.' The Government sends a coffin. The next day it sends a hearse and some bearers to take the coffin and carry it to the cemetery. The bearers will come and take up the coffin; there will be nothing in it."

"Put something in it."

"A dead body? I have none."

"No."

"What then?"

"A living body."

"What living body?"

"Me!" said Jean Valjean.

Fauchelevant, who had taken a seat, sprang up as if a cracker had burst under his chair.

"You!"

"Why not?"

Jean Valjean had one of those rare smiles which came over him like the aurora in a winter sky.

"You know, Fauchelevant, that you said, 'Mother Crucifixion is dead;' and that I added, 'And Father Madeleine is buried.' It will be so."

"Ah! good, you are laughing; you are not talking seriously."

"Very seriously. I must get out."

"Undoubtedly."

"And I told you to find a basket and a cover for me also."

"Well?"

"The basket will be of pine, and the cover will be a black cloth."

"In the first place, a white cloth. The nuns are buried white."

"Well, a white cloth."

"You are not like other men, Father Madeleine."

To see such devices, which are nothing more than the savage and foolhardy inventions of the galleys, appear in the midst of the peaceful things that surrounded him, and mingled with what he called the "little jog-jog of the convent," was to Fauchelevent an astonishment comparable to that of a person who should see a seamew fishing in the brook in the Rue St. Denis.

Jean Valjean continued,—

"The question is, how to get out without being seen. This is the means. But in the first place tell me how is it done? where is this coffin?"

"The empty one?"

"Yes."

"Down in what is called the dead-room. It is on two trestles and under the pall."

"What is the length of the coffin?"

"Six feet."

"What is the dead-room?"

"It is a room on the ground floor, with a grated window towards the garden, closed on the outside with a shutter, and two doors; one leading to the convent, the other to the church."

"What church?"

"The church on the street—the church for everybody."

"Have you the keys of those two doors?"

"No. I have the key of the door that opens into the convent; the porter has the key of the door that opens into the church."

"When does the porter open that door?"

"Only to let in the bearers, who come after the coffin; as soon as the coffin goes out, the door is closed again."

“Who nails up the coffin?”

“I do.”

“Who puts the cloth on it?”

“I do.”

“Are you alone?”

“No other man, except the Police physician, can enter the dead-room. That is even written upon the wall.”

“Could you, to-night, when all are asleep in the convent, hide me in that room?”

“No. But I can hide you in a little dark closet which opens into the dead room, where I keep my burial tools, and of which I have the care and the key.”

“At what hour will the hearse come after the coffin to-morrow?”

“About three o’clock in the afternoon. The burial takes place at the Vaugirard Cemetery, a little before night. It is not very near.”

“I shall remain hidden in your tool-closet all night and all the morning. And about eating? I shall be hungry.”

“I will bring you something.”

“You can come and nail me up in the coffin at two o’clock.”

Fauchelevant started back, and began to snap his fingers.

“But it is impossible!”

“Pshaw! to take a hammer and drive some nails into a board?”

What seemed unheard-of to Fauchelevant was, we repeat, simple to Jean Valjean. Jean Valjean had been in worse straits. He who has been a prisoner knows the art of making himself small according to the dimensions of the place for escape. The prisoner is subject to flight as the sick man is to the crisis which cures or kills him. An escape is a cure. What does not one undergo to be cured? To be nailed up and carried out in a chest like a bundle, to live a long time in a box, to find air where there is none,

to economize the breath for entire hours, to know how to be stifled without dying—that was one of the gloomy talents of Jean Valjean.

Moreover, a coffin in which there is a living being, that convict's expedient, is also an Emperor's expedient. If we can believe the monk Austin Castillejo, this was the means which Charles V., desiring after his abdication to see La Plombes again a last time, employed to bring her into the monastery of St. Juste and to take her out again.

Fauchelevant, recovering a little, exclaimed,—

“But how will you manage to breathe?”

“I shall breathe.”

“In that box? Only to think of it suffocates me.”

“You surely have a gimlet; you can make a few little holes about the mouth here and there, and you can nail it without drawing the upper board tight.”

“Good! But if you happen to cough or sneeze?”

“He who is escaping never coughs and never sneezes.”

And Jean Valjean added,—

“Father Fauchelevant, I must decide: either to be taken here, or to be willing to go out in the hearse.”

Everybody has noticed the taste which cats have for stopping and loitering in a half-open door. Who has not said to a cat, “Why don't you come in?” There are men who, with an opportunity half-open before them, have a similar tendency to remain undecided between two resolutions, at the risk of being crushed by destiny abruptly closing the opportunity. The over-prudent, cats as they are, and because they are cats, sometimes run more danger than the bold. Fauchelevant was of this hesitating nature. However, Jean Valjean's coolness won him over in spite of himself. He grumbled,—

“It is true, there is no other way.”

Jean Valjean resumed,—

"The only thing that I am anxious about is, what will be done at the cemetery."

"That is just what does not embarrass me," exclaimed Fauchelevent. "If you are sure of getting yourself out of the coffin, I am sure of getting you out of the grave. The gravedigger is a drunkard and a friend of mine. He is Father Mestienne, an old son of the old vine. The gravedigger puts the dead in the grave, and I put the gravedigger in my pocket. I will tell you what will take place. We shall arrive a little before dusk, three-quarters of an hour before the cemetery gates are closed. The hearse will go to the grave. I shall follow ; that is my business. I will have a hammer, a chisel, and some pincers in my pocket. The hearse stops, the bearers tie a rope around your coffin and let you down. The priest says the prayers, makes the sign of the cross, sprinkles the holy water, and is off. I remain alone with Father Mestienne. He is my friend, I tell you. One of two things ; either he will be drunk, or he will not be drunk. If he is not drunk, I say to him, 'Come and take a drink before the *Good Quince* is shut.' I get him away, I fuddle him ; Father Mestienne is not long in getting fuddled, he is always half way. I lay him under the table, I take his card from him to return to the cemetery with, and I come back without him. You will have only me to deal with. If he is drunk, I say to him, 'Be off ; I'll do your work.' He goes away, and I pull you out of the hole."

Jean Valjean extended his hand, upon which Fauchelevent threw himself with a rustic outburst of touching devotion.

"It is settled, Father Fauchelevent. All will go well."

"Provided nothing goes amiss," thought Fauchelevent. "How terrible that would be !"

VI.

NEXT day, as the sun was declining, the scattered passers on the Boulevard du Maine took off their hats at the passage of an old-fashioned hearse, adorned with death's-heads, cross-bones, and tear-drops. In this hearse there was a coffin covered with a white cloth, upon which was displayed a large black cross like a great dummy with hanging arms. A draped carriage, in which might be seen a priest in a surplice, and a choir-boy in a red calotte, followed. Two bearers in grey uniform with black trimmings walked on the right and left of the hearse. In the rear came an old man dressed like a labourer, who limped. The procession moved towards the Vaugirard Cemetery.

Sticking out of the man's pocket were the handle of a hammer, the blade of a cold chisel, and the double handles of a pair of pincers.

The Vaugirard Cemetery was an exception among the cemeteries of Paris. It had its peculiar usages, so far that it had its *porte-cochère*, and its small door, which, in the quarter, old people, tenacious of old words, called the cavalier door, and the pedestrian door. The Bernardine-Benedictines of the Petit Picpus had obtained the right, as we have said, to be buried in a corner apart and at night, this ground having formerly belonged to their community. The grave-diggers, having thus to work in the cemetery in the evening in summer, and at night in winter, were subject to a peculiar discipline. The gates of the cemeteries of Paris closed at that epoch at sunset, and, this being a measure of municipal order, the Vaugirard Cemetery was subject to it like the rest. The cavalier door and the pedestrian door were two contiguous gratings; near which

was a pavilion built by the architect Perronet, in which the door-keeper of the cemetery lived. These gratings, therefore, inexorably turned upon their hinges the instant the sun disappeared behind the dome of the Invalides. If any grave-digger, at that moment, was belated in the cemetery, his only resource for getting out was his grave-digger's card, given him by the administration of funeral ceremonies. A sort of letter-box was arranged in the shutter of the gate-keeper's window. The grave-digger dropped his card into this box, the gate-keeper heard it fall, pulled the string, and the pedestrian door opened. If the grave-digger did not have his card, he gave his name; the gate-keeper, sometimes in bed and asleep, got up, went to identify the grave-digger, and open the door with the key; the grave-digger went out, but paid fifteen francs fine.

This cemetery, with its peculiarities breaking over the rules, disturbed the symmetry of the administration. It was suppressed shortly after 1830. The Mont Parnasse Cemetery, called the Cemetery of the East, has succeeded it, and has inherited this famous drinking-house let into the Vaugirard Cemetery, which was surmounted by a quince painted on a board, which looked on one side upon the tables of the drinkers, and on the other upon graves, with this inscription, "*The Good Quince.*"

The Vaugirard Cemetery was what might be called a decayed cemetery. It was falling into disuse. Mould was invading it, flowers were leaving it. The well-to-do citizens little cared to be buried at Vaugirard—it sounded poor. Père La Chaise is very fine! to be buried in Père La Chaise is like having mahogany furniture. Elegance is understood by that. The Vaugirard Cemetery was a venerable inclosure, laid out like an old French garden. Straight walks, box, evergreens, hollies, old tombs under old yews, very high grass. Night there was terrible. There were some very dismal outlines there.

The sun had not yet set when the hearse with the white pall and the black cross entered the avenue of the Vaugirard Cemetery. The lame man who followed it was no other than Fauchelevant.

The burial of Mother Crucifixion in the vault under the altar, the departure of Cosette, the introduction of Jean Valjean into the dead-room, all had been carried out without obstruction, and nothing had gone wrong.

We will say, by the way, the inhumation of Mother Crucifixion under the convent altar is, to us, a perfectly venial thing. It is one of those faults which resemble a duty. The nuns had accomplished it, not only without discomposure, but with an approving conscience. In the cloister, what is called the "Government" is only an interference with authority—an interference which is always questionable. First the rules; as to the code, we will see. Men, make as many laws as you please, but keep them for yourselves. The tribute to Cæsar is never more than the remnant of the tribute to God. A prince is nothing in presence of a principle.

Fauchelevant limped behind the hearse, very well satisfied. His two twin plots, one with the nuns, the other with M. Madeleine, one for the convent, the other against it, had succeeded equally well. Jean Valjean's calmness had that powerful tranquillity which is contagious. Fauchelevant had now no doubt of success. What remained to be done was nothing. Within two years he had fuddled the grave-digger ten times, good Father Mestienne, a rubicund old fellow. Father Mestienne was play for him. He did what he liked with him. He got him drunk at will and at his fancy. Mestienne saw through Fauchelevant's eyes. Fauchelevant's security was complete.

At the moment the convoy entered the avenue leading to the cemetery, Fauchelevant, happy, looked at the hearse and

rubbed his big hands together, saying in an undertone,—

“Here’s a farce !”

Suddenly the hearse stopped ; they were at the gate. It was necessary to exhibit the burial permit. The undertaker whispered with the porter of the cemetery. During this colloquy, which always causes a delay of a minute or two, somebody, an unknown man, came and placed himself behind the hearse at Fauchelevent’s side. He was a working man, who wore a vest with large pockets, and had a pick under his arm.

Fauchelevent looked at this unknown man.

“Who are you ?” he asked.

The man answered,—

“The grave-digger.”

Should a man survive a cannon-shot through his breast, he would present the appearance that Fauchelevent did.

“The grave-digger ?”

“Yes.”

“You !”

“Me.”

“The grave-digger is Father Mestienne.”

“He was.”

“How ! he was ?”

“He is dead.”

Fauchelevent was ready for anything but this, that a grave-digger could die. It is, however, true ; grave-diggers themselves die. By dint of digging graves for others, they open their own.

Fauchelevent remained speechless. He had hardly the strength to stammer out,—

“But it’s not possible !”

“It is so.”

“But,” repeated he, feebly, “the grave-digger is Father Mestienne.”

"After Napoleon, Louis XVIII. After Mestienne Gribier. Peasant, my name is Gribier."

Fauchelevant grew pale; he stared at Gribier.

He was a long, thin, livid man, perfectly funereal. He had the appearance of a broken-down doctor turned grave-digger.

Fauchelevant burst out laughing.

"Ah! what droll things happen! Father Mestienne is dead. Little Father Mestienne is dead, but hurrah for little Father Lenoir! You know what little Father Lenoir is? It is the mug of red for a six spot. It is the mug of Surène, zounds! real Paris Surène. So he is dead, old Mestienne! I am sorry for it; he was a jolly fellow. But you too, you are a jolly fellow. Isn't that so, comrade? we will go and take a drink together, right away."

The man answered, "I have studied, I have graduated. I never drink."

The hearse had started, and was rolling along the main avenue of the cemetery.

Fauchelevant had slackened his pace. He limped still more from anxiety than from infirmity.

The grave-digger walked before him.

Fauchelevant again scrutinized the unexpected Gribier.

He was one of those men who, though young, have an old appearance, and who, though thin, are very strong.

"Comrade!" cried Fauchelevant.

The man turned.

"I am the gravedigger of the convent."

"My colleague," said the man.

Fauchelevant, illiterate, but very keen, understood that he had to do with a very formidable species, a good talker.

He mumbled out,—

"Is it so, Father Mestienne is dead?"

The man answered,—

"Perfectly. The good God consulted his list of bills

payable. It was Father Mestienne's turn. Father Mestienne is dead."

Fauchelevant repeated mechanically,—

"The good God."

"The good God," said the man, authoritatively. "What the philosophers call the Eternal Father; the Jacobins, the Supreme Being."

"Are we not going to make each other's acquaintance?" stammered Fauchelevant.

"It is made. You are a peasant, I am a Parisian."

"We are not acquainted as long as we have not drunk together. He who empties his glass empties his heart. Come and drink with me. You can't refuse."

"Business first."

Fauchelevant said to himself, "I am lost."

They were now only a few rods from the path that led to the nuns' corner.

The grave-digger continued,—

"Peasant, I have seven youngsters that I must feed. As they must eat, I must not drink."

And he added, with the satisfaction of a serious being who is making a sententious phrase,—

"Their hunger is the enemy of my thirst."

The hearse turned a huge cypress, left the main path, took a little one, entered upon the grounds, and was lost in a thicket. This indicated the immediate proximity to the grave. Fauchelevant slackened his pace, but could not slacken that of the hearse. Luckily the mellow soil, wet by the winter rains, stuck to the wheels and made the track heavy.

He approached the grave-digger.

"They have such a good little Argenteuil wine," suggested Fauchelevant.

"Villager," continued the man, "I ought not to be a grave-digger. My father was porter at the Prytanée. He

intended me for literature. But he was unfortunate. He met with losses at the Bourse, I was obliged to renounce the condition of an author. However, I am still a public scribe."

"But then you are not the grave-digger?" replied Fauchelevent, catching at a straw, feeble as it was.

"One does not prevent the other. I cumulate."

Fauchelevent did not understand this last word.

"Let us go and drink," said he.

Here an observation is necessary. Fauchelevent, whatever was his anguish, proposed to drink, but did not explain himself on one point—who should pay? Ordinarily Fauchelevent proposed, and Father Mestienne paid. A proposal to drink resulted evidently from the new situation produced by the fact of the new grave-digger, and this proposal he must make; but the old gardener left, not unintentionally, the proverbial quarter of an hour of Rabelais in the shade. As for him, Fauchelevent, however excited he was, he did not care about paying.

The grave-digger went on, with a smile of superiority,—

"We must live. I accepted the succession of Father Mestienne. When one has almost finished his classes, he is a philosopher. To the labour of my hand, I have added the labour of my arm. I have my little writer's shop at the market in the Rue de Sèvres. You know?—the market of the Parapluies. All the cooks of the Croix Rouge come to me; I patch up their declarations to their true loves. In the morning I write love-letters; in the evening I dig graves. Such is life, countryman."

The hearse advanced; Fauchelevent, full of anxiety, looked about him on all sides. Great drops of sweat were falling from his forehead.

"However," continued the grave-digger, "one cannot serve two mistresses; I must choose between the pen and the pick. The pick hurts my hand."

The hearse stopped.

The choir-boy got out of the mourning carriage, then the priest.

One of the forward wheels of the hearse mounted on a little heap of earth, beyond which was seen an open grave.

"Here is a farce!" repeated Fauchelevent, in consternation.

VII.

We know that the man in the coffin was Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean had arranged it so that he could live in it and could breathe a very little.

It is a strange thing to what extent an easy conscience gives calmness in other respects. The entire combination pre-arranged by Jean Valjean had been executed, and executed well, since the night before. He counted, as did Fauchelevent, upon Father Mestienne. He had no doubt of the result. Never was a situation more critical, never calmness more complete.

The four boards of the coffin exhaled a kind of terrible peace. It seemed as if something of the repose of the dead had entered into the tranquillity of Jean Valjean.

From within that coffin he had been able to follow, and he had followed, all the phases of the fearful drama which he was playing with Death.

Soon after Fauchelevent had finished nailing down the upper board, Jean Valjean had felt himself carried out, then wheeled along. By the diminished jolting, he had felt that he was passing from the pavement to the hard ground—that is to say, that he was leaving the streets and entering upon the boulevards. By a dull sound, he had divined that they were crossing the bridge of Austerlitz. At the first stop he had comprehended that they were entering the

cemetery ; at the second stop, he had said, "Here is the grave.

He felt that hands hastily seized the coffin, then a harsh scraping upon the boards ; he concluded that that was a rope which they were tying around the coffin to let it down into the excavation.

Then he felt a kind of dizziness.

Probably the bearer and the grave-digger had tipped the coffin and let the head down before the feet. He returned fully to himself on feeling that he was horizontal and motionless. He had touched the bottom.

He felt a certain chill.

A voice rose above him, icy and solemn. He heard pass away some Latin words which he did not understand, pronounced so slowly that he could catch them one after another.

He heard upon the board which covered him something like the gentle patter of a few drops of rain. It was probably the holy water.

He thought, "This will soon be finished. A little more patience. The priest is going away. Fauchelevent will take Mestienne away to drink. They will leave me. Then Fauchelevent will come back alone, and I shall get out. That will take a good hour."

The deep voice resumed,—

"Requiescat in pace."

And a child's voice said,—

"Amen."

Jean Valjean, intently listening, perceived something like receding steps.

"Now there they go," thought he. "I am alone."

All at once he heard a sound above his head which seemed to him like a clap of thunder.

It was a spadeful of earth falling upon the coffin.

▲ second spadeful of earth fell.

One of the holes by which he breathed was stopped
A third spadeful of earth fell.

Then a fourth.

There are things stronger than the strongest man.
Valjean lost consciousness.

VIII.

LET us see what occurred over the coffin in which Jean Valjean lay.

When the hearse had departed, and the priest and the choir-boy had got into the carriage, and were gone, Fauchelevent, who had never taken his eyes off the grave-digger, saw him stoop and grasp his spade, which was standing upright in the heap of earth.

Hereupon Fauchelevent formed a supreme resolve.

Placing himself between the grave and the grave-digger, and folding his arms, he said,—

“I’ll pay for it!”

The grave-digger eyed him with amazement, and replied,—

“What, peasant?”

Fauchelevent repeated,—

“I’ll pay for it.”

“For what?”

“For the wine.”

“What wine?”

“The Argenteuil.”

“Where’s the Argenteuil?”

“At the ‘Good Quince.’”

“Go to the devil!” said the grave-digger.

And he threw a spadeful of earth upon the coffin.

The coffin gave back a hollow sound. Fauchelevent felt

himself stagger, and nearly fell into the grave. In a voice in which the strangling sound of the death-rattle began to be heard, he cried,—

“Come, comrade, before the ‘Good Quince’ closes!”

The grave-digger took up another spadeful of earth. Fauchelevent continued,—

“I’ll pay,” and he seized the grave-digger by the arm.

“Hark ye, comrade,” he said, “I am the grave-digger of the convent, and have come to help you. It’s a job we can do at night. Let us take a drink first.”

And as he spoke, even while clinging desperately to this urgent effort, he asked himself, with some misgiving,—“And even should he drink—will he get tipsy?”

“Good rustic,” said the grave-digger, “if you insist, I consent. We’ll have a drink, but after my work, never before it.”

And he tossed his spade again. Fauchelevent held him.

“It is Argenteuil at six sous the pint!”

“Ah, bah!” said the grave-digger, “you’re a bore. Ding-dong, ding-dong, the same thing over and over again; that’s all you can say. Be off about your business.”

And he threw in the second spadeful.

Fauchelevent had reached that point where a man knows no longer what he is saying.

“Oh! come on, and take a glass, since I’m the one to pay,” he again repeated.

“When we’ve put the child to bed,” said the grave-digger.

He tossed in the third spadeful: then, plunging his spade into the earth, he added,—

“You see, now, it’s going to be cold to-night, and the dead one would cry out after us, if we were to plant her there without good covering.”

At this moment, in the act of filling his spade, the grave-digger stooped low, and the pocket of his vest gaped open.

Les Misérables—Cosette.

The bewildered eye of Fauchelevent rested mechanically on this pocket, and remained fixed.

The sun was not yet hidden behind the horizon, and there was still light enough to distinguish something white in the gaping pocket.

All the lightning which the eye of a Picardy peasant can contain flashed into the pupils of Fauchelevent. A new idea had struck him.

Without the grave-digger, who was occupied with his spadeful of earth, perceiving him, he slipped his hand from behind into the pocket, and took from him the white object it contained.

The grave-digger flung into the grave the fourth spadeful.

Just as he was turning to take the fifth, Fauchelevent, looking at him with imperturbable calmness, asked,—

“By the way, my new friend, have you your card?”

The grave-digger stopped.

“What card?”

“The cemetery gate will be closed.”

“Well, what then?”

“Have you your card?”

“Oh! my card!” said the grave-digger, and he felt in his pocket.

Having rummaged one pocket, he tried another. From these he proceeded to try his watch-fobs, exploring the first, and turning the second inside out.

“No!” said he, “no! I haven’t got my card. I must have forgotten it.”

“Fifteen francs fine!” said Fauchelevent.

The grave-digger turned green. Green is the paleness of people naturally livid.

“Oh, good-gracious God, what a fool I am!” he exclaimed. “Fifteen francs fine!”

“Three hundred sou pieces,” said Fauchelevent.

The grave-digger dropped his spade.

Fauchelevant's turn had come.

"Come ! come, recruit," said Fauchelevant, "never despair ; there's nothing to kill one's self about, and feed the worms. Fifteen francs are fifteen francs, and, besides, you may not have them to pay. I am an old hand, and you a new one. I know all the tricks and traps and turns and twists of the business. I'll give you a friend's advice. One thing is clear—the sun is setting—and the graveyard will be closed in five minutes."

"That's true," replied the grave-digger.

"Five minutes is not time enough for you to fill the grave—it's as deep as the very devil—and get out of this before the gate is shut."

"You're right."

"In that case, there is fifteen francs fine."

"Fifteen francs !"

"But you have time. Where do you live?"

"Just by the barrière. Fifteen minutes' walk. Number 87, Rue de Vaugirard."

"You have time, if you will hang your toggery about your neck, to get out at once."

"That's true."

"Once outside of the gate, you scamper home, get your card, come back, and the gatekeeper will let you in again. Having your card, there's nothing to pay. Then you can bury your dead man. I'll stay here, and watch him while you're gone, to see that he doesn't run away."

"I owe you my life, peasant."

"Be off, then, quick !" said Fauchelevant.

The grave-digger, overcome with gratitude, shook his hands, and started at a run.

When the grave-digger had disappeared through the bushes, Fauchelevant listened until his footsteps died away, and then, bending over the grave, called out in a low voice,—

“Father Madeleine !”

No answer.

Fauchelevant shuddered. He dropped rather than clambered down into the grave, threw himself upon the head of the coffin, and cried out,—

“Are you there?”

Silence in the coffin.

Fauchelevant, no longer able to breathe for the shiver that was on him, took his cold chisel and hammer, and wrenched off the top board. The face of Jean Valjean could be seen in the twilight, his eyes closed and his cheeks colourless.

Fauchelevant's hair stood erect with alarm ; he rose to his feet, and then tottered with his back against the side of the grave, ready to sink down upon the coffin. He looked upon Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean lay there pallid and motionless.

Fauchelevant murmured in a voice low as a whisper,—

“He is dead !”

Then straightening himself, and crossing his arms so violently that his clenched fists sounded against his shoulders, he exclaimed,—

“This is the way I have saved him !”

Then the poor old man began to sob, talking aloud to himself the while, for it is a mistake to think that talking to one's self is not natural. Powerful emotions often speak aloud.

“It's Father Mestienne's fault. What did he die for, the fool? What was the use of going off in that way, just when no one expected it? It was he who killed poor M. Madeleine Father Madeleine! He is in the coffin. He's settled. There's an end of it. Now, what's the sense of such things? Good God! he's dead! Yes, and his little girl—what am I to do with her? What will the fruit-woman say? That such a man could die in that way.

Good Heaven, is it possible? When I think that he put himself under my cart! Father Madeleine! Father Madeleine! Mercy, he's suffocated, I said so—but, he wouldn't believe me. Now, here's a pretty piece of business! He's dead—one of the very best men God ever made; ay, the best, the very best! And his little girl! I'm not going back there again! I'm going to stay here. To have done such a thing as this! It's well worth while to be two old greybeards, in order to be two old fools. But, to begin with, how did he manage to get into the convent?—that's where it started. Such things shouldn't be done. Father Madeleine! Father Madeleine! Father Madeleine! Madeleine! Monsieur Madeleine! Monsieur Mayor! He doesn't hear me. Get yourself out of this now, if you please."

And he tore his hair.

At a distance, through the trees, a harsh grating sound was heard. It was the gate of the cemetery closing.

Fauchelevant again bent over Jean Valjean, but suddenly started back with all the recoil that was possible in a grave. Jean Valjean's eyes were open, and gazing at him.

To behold death is terrifying, and to see a sudden restoration is nearly as much so. Fauchelevant became cold and white as a stone, haggard and utterly disconcerted by all these powerful emotions, and not knowing whether he had the dead or the living to deal with, stared at Jean Valjean, who in turn stared at him.

"I was falling asleep," said Jean Valjean.

And he rose to a sitting posture.

Fauchelevant dropped on his knees.

"Oh, blessed Virgin! How you frightened me!"

Then springing again to his feet, he cried,—

"Thank you, Father Madeleine!"

Jean Valjean had merely swooned. The open air had revived him.

Joy is the reflex or terror. Fauchelevant had nearly as much difficulty as Jean Valjean in coming to himself.

"Then you're not dead! Oh, what good sense you have! I called you so loudly that you got over it. When I saw you with your eyes shut, I said, Well, there now! he's suffocated!' I should have gone raving mad—mad enough for a strait-jacket. They'd have put me in the Bicêtre. What would you have had me do, if you had been dead? And your little girl! The fruit-woman would have understood nothing about it! A child plumped into her lap, and its grandfather dead! What a story to tell! By all the saints in heaven, what a story! Ah! but you're alive—that's the best of it."

"I am cold," said Jean Valjean.

These words recalled Fauchelevant completely to the real state of affairs, which were urgent. These two men, even when restored, felt, without knowing it, a peculiar agitation and a strange inward trouble, which was but the sinister bewilderment of the place.

"Let us get away from here at once," said Fauchelevant.

He thrust his hand into his pocket, and drew from it a flask with which he was provided.

"But a drop of this first," said he.

The flask completed what the open air had begun. Jean Valjean took a swallow of brandy, and felt thoroughly restored.

He got out of the coffin, and assisted Fauchelevant to nail down the lid again. Three minutes afterwards, they were out of the grave.

After this, Fauchelevant was calm enough. He took his time. The cemetery was closed. There was no fear of the return of Gribier, the grave-digger. That recruit was at home, hunting up his "card," and rather unlikely to find

it, as it was in Fauchelevent's pocket. Without his card, he could not get back into the cemetery.

Fauchelevent took the spade and Jean Valjean the pick, and together they buried the empty coffin.

When the grave was filled, Fauchelevent said to Jean Valjean,—

“Come, let us go ; I'll keep the spade, you take the pick.”

Night was coming on rapidly.

Jean Valjean found it hard to move and walk. In the coffin he had stiffened considerably, somewhat in reality like a corpse. The ankylosis of death had seized him in that narrow wooden box. He had, in some sort, to thaw himself out of the sepulchre.

“You are benumbed,” said Fauchelevent ; “and what a pity that I'm bandy-legged, or we'd run a bit.”

“No matter,” replied Jean Valjean, “a few steps will put my legs into walking order.”

They went out by the avenues the hearse had followed. When they reached the closed gate and the porter's lodge, Fauchelevent, who had the grave-digger's card in his hand, dropped it into the box, the porter drew the cord, the gate opened, and they went through.

“How well everything goes !” said Fauchelevent ; “what a good plan that was of yours, Father Madeleine !”

They passed the *Barrière Vaugirard* in the easiest way in the world. In the neighbourhood of a graveyard, a pick and spade are two passports.

The *Rue de Vaugirard* was deserted.

“Father Madeleine,” said Fauchelevent, as he went along, looking up at the houses, “you have better eyes than mine—which is number 87 ?”

“Here it is, now,” said Jean Valjean.

"There's no one in the street," resumed Fauchelevent. "Give me the pick, and wait for me a couple of minutes."

Fauchelevent went in at number 87, ascended to the topmost flight, guided by the instinct which always leads the poor to the garret, and knocked, in the dark, at the door of a little attic room. A voice called,—

"Come in !"

It was Gribier's voice.

Fauchelevent pushed open the door. The lodging of the grave-digger was, like all these shelters of the needy, an unfurnished but much littered loft. A packing-case of some kind—a coffin, perhaps—supplied the place of a bureau, a straw pallet the place of a bed, a butter-pot the place of water-cooler, and the floor served alike for chairs and table. In one corner, on a ragged old scrap of carpet, was a haggard woman, and a number of children were huddled together. The whole of this wretched interior bore the traces of recent overturn. One would have said that there had been an earthquake served up there "for one." The coverlets were displaced, the ragged garments scattered about, the pitcher broken, the mother had been weeping, and the children probably beaten ; all traces of a headlong and violent search. It was plain that the grave-digger had been looking, wildly, for his card, and had made everything in the attic, from his pitcher to his wife, responsible for the loss. He had a desperate appearance.

But Fauchelevent was in too great a hurry for the end of his adventure to notice this gloomy side of his triumph.

As he came in he said,—

"I've brought your spade and pick."

Gribier looked at him with stupefaction.

The Convent of Petit Picpus.

“What, is it you, peasant?”

“And, to-morrow morning, you will find your card with the gate-keeper of the cemetery.”

And he set down the pick and the spade on the floor.

“What does all this mean?” asked Gribier.

“Why, it means that you let your card drop out of your pocket; that I found it on the ground when you had gone; that I buried the corpse; that I filled in the grave; that I finished your job; that the porter will give you your card, and that you will not have to pay the fifteen francs. That’s what it means, recruit!”

“Thanks, villager!” exclaimed Gribier, in amazement.
“The next time I will treat.”

IX.

AN hour later, in the depth of night, two men and a child stood in front of No. 62, Petite Rue Picpus. The elder of the men lifted the knocker and rapped.

It was Fauchelevent, Jean Valjean, and Cosette.

The two men had gone to look for Cosette at the shop of the fruiteress of the Rue du Chemin Vert, where Fauchelevent had left her on the preceding evening. Cosette had passed the twenty-four hours wondering what it all meant, and trembling in silence. She trembled so much that she had not wept, nor had she tasted food nor slept. The worthy fruit-woman had asked her a thousand questions without obtaining any other answer than a sad look, that never varied. Cosette did not let a word of all she had heard and seen in the last two days escape her. She divined that a crisis had come. She felt, in her very heart, that she must be “good.” Who has not experienced the supreme effect of these two words pronounced in a certain tone in the ear of some little frightened creature.

"Don't speak!" Fear is mute. Besides, no one ever keeps a secret so well as a child.

But when, after those mournful four-and-twenty hours, she again saw Jean Valjean, she uttered such a cry of joy that any thoughtful person hearing her would have divined in it an escape from some yawning gulf.

Fauchelevant belonged to the convent and knew all the pass-words. Every door opened before him.

Thus was that doubly fearful problem solved of getting out and getting in again.

The porter, who had his instructions, opened the little side door which served to communicate between the court and the garden, and which, twenty years ago, could still be seen from the street, in the wall at the extremity of the court, facing the *porte-cochère*. The porter admitted all three by this door, and from that point they went to this private inner parlour, where Fauchelevant had on the previous evening received the orders of the prioress.

The prioress, rosary in hand, was awaiting them. A mother, with her veil down, stood near her. A modest taper lighted, or one might almost say, pretended to light up the parlour.

The prioress scrutinized Jean Valjean. Nothing scans so carefully as a downcast eye.

Then she proceeded to question,—

"You are the brother?"

"Yes, reverend mother," replied Fauchelevant.

"What is your name?"

Fauchelevant replied,—

"Ultimus Fauchelevant!"

He had, in reality, had a brother named Ultimus, who was dead.

"From what part of the country are you?"

Fauchelevant answered,—

"From Picquigny, near Amiens."

"What is your age?"

Fauchelevant answered,—

"Fifty."

"What is your business?"

Fauchelevant answered,—

"Gardener."

"Are you a true Christian?"

Fauchelevant answered,—

"All of our family are such."

"Is this your little girl?"

Fauchelevant answered,—

"Yes, reverend mother."

"You are her father?"

Fauchelevant answered,—

"Her grandfather."

The mother said to the prioress in an undertone,—

"He answers well."

Jean Valjean had not spoken a word.

The prioress looked at Cosette attentively, and then said, aside to the mother,—

"She will be homely."

The two mothers talked together very low for a few minutes in a corner of the parlour, and then the prioress turned and said,—

"Father Fauvent, you will have another knee-cap and bell. We need two now."

So, next morning, two little bells were heard tinkling in the garden, and the nuns could not keep from lifting a corner of their veils. They saw two men digging side by side, in the lower part of the garden, under the trees—Fauvent and another. Immense event! The silence was broken, so far as to say,—

"It's an assistant-gardener!"

The mothers added,—

"He is Father Fauvent's brother."

In fact, Jean Valjean was regularly installed ; he had the leather knee-cap and the bell ; henceforth he had his commission. His name was Ultimus Fauchelevant.

The strongest recommendation for Cosette's admission had been the remark of the prioress : "*She will be homely.*"

The prioress, having uttered this prediction, immediately took Cosette into her friendship, and gave her a place in the school building as a charity pupil.

There is nothing not entirely logical in this.

It is all in vain to have no mirrors in convents ; women are conscious of their own appearance ; young girls who know that they are pretty do not readily become nuns ; the inclination to the calling being in inverse proportion to good looks, more is expected from the homely than from the handsome ones. Hence a marked preference for the homely.

This whole affair elevated good old Fauchelevant greatly. He had achieved a triple success—in the eyes of Jean Valjean, whom he had rescued and sheltered ; with the grave-digger, Gribier, who said he had saved him from a fine ; and, at the convent, which, thanks to him, in retaining the coffin of Mother Crucifixion under the altar, eluded Cæsar and satisfied God. There was a coffin with a body in it at the Petit-Picpus, and a coffin without a body in the Vaugirard Cemetery. Public order was greatly disturbed thereby, undoubtedly, but nobody perceived it. As for the convent, its gratitude to Fauchelevant was deep. Fauchelevant became the best of servants and the most precious of gardeners.

At the next visit of the Archbishop the prioress related the affair to his Grace, half by way of a confession and half as a boast.

X

Cosette, at the convent, still kept silent. She very naturally thought herself Jean Valjean's daughter. Moreover, knowing nothing, there was nothing she could tell, and then, in any case, she would not have told anything. As we have remarked, nothing habituates children to silence like misfortune. Cosette had suffered so much that she was afraid of everything—even to speak, even to breathe. A single word had so often brought down an avalanche on her head! She had hardly begun to feel reassured since she had been with Jean Valjean. She soon became accustomed to the convent. Still, she longed for Catharine, but dared not say so. One day, however, she said to Jean Valjean, "If I had known it, father, I would have brought her with me."

Cosette, in becoming a pupil at the convent, had to assume the dress of the school-girls. Jean Valjean succeeded in having the garments which she laid aside given to him. It was the same mourning suit he had carried for her to put on when she left the Thénardiens. It was not much worn. Jean Valjean rolled up these garments, as well as the woollen stockings and shoes, with much camphor and other aromatic substances, of which there is such an abundance in convents, and packed them in a small valise which he managed to procure. He put this valise in a chair near his bed, and always kept the key of it in his pocket.

"Father," Cosette one day asked him, "what is that box there that smells so good?"

Father Fauchelevent, besides the "glory" we have just described, and of which he was unconscious, was recompensed for his good deed; in the first place it made

him happy, and then he had less work to do, as it was divided. Finally, as he was very fond of tobacco, he found the presence of M. Madeleine advantageous in another point of view; he took three times as much tobacco as before, and that, too, in a manner infinitely more voluptuous, since M. Madeleine paid for it. The nuns did not adopt the name of *Ultimus*; they called Jean Valjean *the other Fauvent*.

If those holy women had possessed aught of the discrimination of Javert, they might have remarked, in course of time, that when there was any little errand to run outside for on account of the garden, it was always the elder Fauchelevant, old, infirm, and lame as he was, who went, and never the other; but whether it be that eyes continually fixed upon God cannot play the spy, or whether they were too constantly employed in watching one another, they noticed nothing.

However, Jean Valjean was well satisfied to keep quiet and still. Javert watched the quarter for a good long month.

The convent was to Jean Valjean like an island surrounded by wide waters. These four walls were, henceforth, the world to him. Within them he could see enough of the sky to be calm, and enough of Cosette to be happy.

A very pleasant life began again for him.

He lived with Fauchelevant in the out-building at the foot of the garden. This petty structure, built of rubbish, which was still standing in 1845, consisted, as we have already stated, of three rooms, all of which were bare to the very walls. The principal one had been forcibly pressed upon M. Madeleine by Fauchelevant, for Jean Valjean had resisted in vain. The wall of this room, besides the two nails used for hanging up the knee-leather and the hoe, was decorated with a royalist specimen of paper-money of '93, pasted above the fire place.

Jean Valjean worked every day in the garden, and was very useful there. He had formerly been a pruner, and now found it quite in his way to be a gardener. It may be remembered that he knew all kinds of receipts and secrets of field-work. These he turned to account. Nearly all the orchard trees were wild stock; he grafted them and made them bear excellent fruit.

Cosette was allowed to come every day and pass an hour with him. As the sisters were melancholy, and he was kind, the child compared him with them, and worshipped him. Every day, at the hour appointed, she would hurry to the little building. When she entered the old place, she filled it with paradise. Jean Valjean basked in her presence, and felt his own happiness increase by reason of the happiness he conferred on Cosette. The delight we inspire in others has this enchanting peculiarity, that, far from being diminished like every other reflection, it returns to us more radiant than ever. At the hours of recreation, Jean Valjean from a distance watched her playing and romping, and he could distinguish her laughter from the laughter of the rest.

For, now, Cosette laughed.

Even Cosette's countenance had, in a measure, changed. The gloomy cast had disappeared. Laughter is sunshine; it chases winter from the human face.

When the recreation was over and Cosette went in, Jean Valjean watched the windows of her schoolroom, and, at night, would rise from his bed, to take a look at the windows of the room in which she slept.

God has his own ways. The convent contributed, like Cosette, to confirm and complete, in Jean Valjean, the work of the Bishop. It cannot be denied that one of virtue's phases ends in pride. Therein is a bridge built by the Evil One. Jean Valjean was, perhaps, without

knowing it, near that very phase of virtue, and that very bridge, when Providence flung him into the convent of the Petit-Picpus. So long as he compared himself only with the Bishop, he found himself unworthy and remained humble; but, for some time past, he had been comparing himself with the rest of men, and pride was springing up in him. Who knows? He might have finished by going gradually back to hate.

The convent stopped him on this descent.

It was the second place of captivity he had seen. In his youth, in what had been for him the commencement of life, and, later, quite recently too, he had seen another, a frightful place, a terrible place, the severities of which had always seemed to him to be the iniquity of public justice and the crime of the law. Now, after having seen the galleys, he saw the cloister, and reflecting that he had been an inmate of the galleys, and that he now was, so to speak, a spectator of the cloister, he anxiously compared them in his meditations with anxiety.

Sometimes he would lean upon his spade and descend slowly along the endless rounds of revery.

He recalled his former companions, and how wretched they were. They rose at dawn and toiled until night. Scarcely allowed to sleep, they lay on camp-beds, and were permitted to have mattresses but two inches thick, in halls which were warmed only during the most inclement months. They were attired in hideous red sacks, and had given to them, as a favour, a pair of canvas pantaloons in the heats of midsummer, and a square of woollen stuff to throw over their shoulders during the bitterest frosts of winter. They had no wine to drink, no meat for food excepting when sent upon "extra hard work." They lived without names, distinguished solely by numbers, and reduced, as it were, to ciphers, lowering their eyes, lowering their voices, with

their hair cropped close, under the rod, and plunged in shame.

Then, his thoughts reverted to the beings before his eyes.

These beings, also, lived with their hair cut close, their eyes bent down, their voices hushed, not in shame indeed, but amid the scoffs of the world; not with their backs bruised by the gaoler's staff, but with their shoulders lacerated by self-inflicted penance. Their names, too, had perished from among men, and they now existed under austere designations alone. They never ate meat and never drank wine; they often remained until evening without food. They were attired not in red sacks, but in black habits of woollen, heavy in summer, light in winter, unable to increase or diminish them, without even the privilege, according to the season, of substituting a linen dress or a woollen cloak, and then, for six months in the year, they wore under-clothing of serge which fevered them. They dwelt not in dormitories warmed only in the bitterest frosts of winter, but in cells where fire was never kindled. They slept not on mattresses two inches thick, but upon straw. Moreover, they were not even allowed to sleep, for, every night, after a day of labour, they were, when whelmed beneath the weight of the first sleep, at the moment when they were just beginning to slumber, and, with difficulty, to collect a little warmth, required to waken, rise and assemble for prayers in an icy-cold and gloomy chapel, with their knees on the stone pavement.

On certain days, each one of these beings, in her turn, had to remain twelve hours in succession kneeling upon the flags, or prostrate on her face, with her arms crossed.

The others were men, these were women. What had these men done? They had robbed, ravished, plundered, killed, assassinated. They were highwaymen, forgers, poisoners, incendiaries, murderers, parricides. What had these women done? They had done nothing.

Les Misérables—Cosette.

On one side, robbery, fraud, imposition, violence, lust, homicide, every species of sacrilege, every description of offence ; on the other, one thing only—innocence.

A perfect innocence almost borne upwards in a mysterious Assumption, clinging still to earth through virtue, already touching heaven through holiness.

On the one hand, the mutual avowal of crimes detailed with bated breath ; on the other, faults confessed aloud. And oh ! what crimes ! and oh ! what faults !

On one side foul miasma, on the other, ineffable perfume. On the one side, a moral pestilence, watched day and night, held in subjection at the cannon's mouth, and slowly consuming its infected victims ; on the other, a chaste kindling of every soul together on the same hearthstone. There, utter gloom ; here, the shadow, but a shadow full of light, and the light full of glowing radiations.

Two seats of slavery ; but, in the former, rescue possible, a legal limit always in view, and, then, escape. In the second, perpetuity, the only hope at the most distant boundary of the future—that gleam of liberty which men call death.

In the former, the captives were enchained by chains only ; in the other, they were enchained by faith alone.

What resulted from the first ? One vast curse, the gnashing of teeth, hatred, desperate depravity, a cry of rage against human society, a sarcasm against heaven.

What issued from the second ? Benediction and love.

And, in these two places, so alike and yet so different, these two species of beings so dissimilar were performing the same work of expiation.

Jean Valjean thoroughly comprehended the expiation of the first—personal expiation, expiation for one's self. But he did not understand that of the others—of these blameless, spotless creatures, and he asked himself with a tremour, "Expiation of what ? What expiation ?"

A voice responded in his conscience—the most divine of all human generosity, expiation for others.

Here we withhold all theories of our own : we are but the narrator ; at Jean Valjean's point of view we place ourselves, and we merely reproduce his impressions.

He had before his eyes the sublime summit of self-denial, the loftiest possible height of virtue ; innocence forgiving men their sins and expiating them in their stead ; servitude endured, torture accepted, chastisement and misery invoked by souls that had not sinned in order that these might not fall upon souls which had ; the love of humanity losing itself in the love of God, but remaining there, distinct and suppliant ; sweet, feeble beings supporting all the torments of those who are punished, yet retaining the smile of those who are rewarded. And then he remembered that he had dared to complain.

Often, in the middle of the night, he would rise from his bed to listen to the grateful anthem of these innocent beings thus overwhelmed with austerities, and he felt the blood run cold in his veins as he reflected that they who were justly punished never raised their voices towards heaven excepting to blaspheme, and that he, wretch that he was, had uplifted his clenched fist against God.

Another strange thing which made him muse and meditate profoundly seemed like an intimation whispered in his ear by Providence itself : the scaling of walls, the climbing over inclosures, the risk taken in defiance of danger or death, the difficult and painful ascent—all those very efforts that he had made to escape from the other place of expiation, he had made to enter this one. Was this an emblem of his destiny ?

This house, also, was a prison, and bore dismal resemblance to the other from which he had fled ; and yet he had never conceived anything like it.

He once more saw gratings, bolts and bars of iron—to shut in whom? Angels.

Those lofty walls which he had seen surrounding tigers, he now saw encircling lambs.

It was a place of expiation, not of punishment; and yet it was still more austere, more sombre and more pitiless than the other. These virgins were more harshly bent down than the convicts. A harsh, cold blast, the blast that had frozen his youth, careered across that grated moat and manacled the vultures; but a wind still more biting and more cruel beat upon the dove cage.

And why?

When he thought of these things, all that was in him gave way before this mystery of sublimity. In these meditations, pride vanished. He reverted, again and again, to himself; he felt his own pitiful unworthiness, and often wept. All that had occurred in his existence for the last six months, led him back towards the holy injunctions of the Bishop; Cosette through love, the convent through humility.

Sometimes, in the evening, about dusk, at the hour when the garden was solitary, he was seen kneeling, in the middle of the walk that ran along the chapel, before the window through which he had looked, on the night of his first arrival, turned towards the spot where he knew that the sister who was performing the reparation was prostrate in prayer. Thus he prayed kneeling before this sister.

It seemed as though he dared not kneel directly before God.

Everything around him, this quiet garden, these balmy flowers, these children, shouting with joy, these meek and simple women, this silent cloister, gradually entered into all his being, and, little by little, his soul subsided into silence like this cloister, into fragrance like these flowers, into peace like this garden, into simplicity like these women, into joy

like these children. And then he reflected that two houses of God had received him in succession at the two critical moments of his life, the first when every door was closed and human society repelled him ; the second, when human society again howled upon his track, and the galleys once more gaped for him ; and that, had it not been for the first, he should have fallen back into crime, and, had it not been for the second, into punishment.

His whole heart melted in gratitude, and he loved more and more.

Several years passed thus. Cosette was growing.



Les Misérables



M A R I U S



M A R I U S



Book First

M. GILLENORMAND

I.

ABOUT eight or nine years after the events already narrated, there was seen on the Boulevard du Temple, and in the neighbourhood of the Château d'Eau, a little boy of eleven or twelve years of age, who would have realized with considerable accuracy the ideal of the Parisian *gamin*, if, with the laughter of his youth upon his lips, his heart had not been absolutely dark and empty. This child was well muffled up in a man's pair of pantaloons, but he had not got them from his father, and in a woman's chemise, which was not an inheritance from his mother. Strangers had clothed him in these rags out of charity. Still, he had a father and a mother. But his father never thought of him, and his mother did not love him. He was one of those children so deserving of pity

from all, who have fathers and mothers, and yet orphans.

This little boy never felt so happy as when in the street. The pavement was not so hard to him as the heart of mother.

His parents had thrown him out into life with a kick.

He had quite ingenuously spread his wings and taken flight.

He was a boisterous, pallid, nimble, wide-awake, roguish urchin, with an air at once vivacious and sickly. He went, came, sang, played pitch and toss, scraped the gutters, stole a little, but he did it gaily, like the cats and the sparrows, laughed when people called him an errand-boy, and got angry when they called him a ragamuffin. He had no shelter, no food, no fire, no love, but he was light-hearted because he was free.

When these poor creatures are men, the millstone of our social system almost always comes in contact with them, and grinds them, but while they are children they escape because they are little. The smallest hole saves them.

However, deserted as this lad was, it happened sometimes, every two or three months, that he would say to himself, "Come, I'll go and see my mother!" Then he would leave the boulevard, the Cirque, the Porte Saint Martin, go down along the quays, cross the bridges, reach the suburbs, walk as far as the Salpêtrière, and arrive—where? Precisely at that double number, 50-52, which is known to the reader—the Gorbeau building.

At the period referred to, the tenement No. 50-52, usually empty, and permanently decorated with the placard "Rooms to let," was, for a wonder, tenanted by several persons who, in all other respects, as is always the case at Paris, had no relation to or connection with each other. They all belonged to that indigent class which begins with

the small bourgeois in embarrassed circumstances, and descends, from grade to grade of wretchedness, through the lower strata of society, until it reaches those two beings in whom all the material things of civilization terminate, the scavenger and the rag-picker.

The "landlady" of the time of Jean Valjean was dead, and had been replaced by another exactly like her. I do not remember what philosopher it was who said, "There is never any lack of old women."

The new old woman was called Madame Burgon, and her life had been remarkable for nothing except a dynasty of three paroquets, which had in succession wielded the sceptre of her affections.

Among those who lived in the building, the wretchedest of all were a family of four persons, father, mother, and two daughters nearly grown, all four lodging in the same garret room, one of those cells of which we have already spoken.

This family at first sight presented nothing very peculiar but its extreme destitution; the father, in renting the room, had given his name as Jondrette. Some time after his moving in, which had singularly resembled, to borrow the memorable expression of the landlady, the entrance of *nothing at all*, this Jondrette said to the old woman, who, like her predecessor, was, at the same time, portress and swept the stairs, "Mother So-and-So, if any one should come and ask for a Pole or an Italian or, perhaps, a Spaniard, that is for me."

Now, this family was the family of our sprightly little barefooted urchin. When he came there, he found distress and, what is sadder still, no smile; a cold hearthstone and cold hearts. When he came in they would ask, "Where have you come from?" He would answer, "From the street." When he was going away they would ask him, "Where are you going to?" He would answer, "Into the

street." His mother would say to him, "What have you come here for?"

The child lived in this absence of affection, like those pale plants that spring up in cellars. He felt no suffering from this mode of existence, and bore no ill-will to anybody. He did not know how a father and mother ought to be.

But yet his mother loved his sisters.

We had forgotten to say that on the Boulevard du Temple this boy went by the name of little Gavroche. Why was his name Gavroche? Probably because his father's name was Jondrette.

To break all links seems to be the instinct of some wretched families.

The room occupied by the Jondrettes in the Gorbeau tenement was the last at the end of the hall. The adjoining cell was tenanted by a very poor young man who was called Monsieur Marius.

Let us see who and what Monsieur Marius was.

II.

IN the Rue Boucherat, Rue de Normandie, and Rue de Saintonge, there still remain a few old inhabitants who preserve a memory of a fine old man named M. Gillenormand, and who like to talk about him. This man was old when they were young. This figure, to those who look sadly upon that vague swarm of shadows which they call the past, has not yet entirely disappeared from the labyrinth of streets in the neighbourhood of the Temple, to which, under Louis XIV., were given the names of all the provinces of France, precisely as in our days the names of all the capitals of Europe have been given to the streets in the

new Quartier Tivoli; an advance, be it said by the way, in which progress is visible.

M. Gillenormand, who was as much alive as any man can be in 1831, was one of those men who have become curiosities, simply because they have lived a long time; and who are strange, because formerly they were like everybody else, and now they are no longer like anybody else. He was a peculiar old man, and very truly a man of another age—the genuine bourgeois of the eighteenth century, a very perfect specimen, a little haughty, wearing his good old bourgeoisie as marquises wear their marquises. He had passed his ninetieth year, walked erect, spoke in a loud voice, saw clearly, drank hard, ate, slept, and snored. He had every one of his thirty-two teeth. He wore glasses only when reading. He was of an amorous humour, but said that for ten years past he had decidedly and entirely renounced women. He was no longer pleasing, he said; he did not add, “I am too old,” but, “I am too poor.” He would say, “If I were not ruined, he! he!” His remaining income, in fact, was only about fifteen thousand francs.

He lived in the Marais, Rue des Filles de Calvaire, No. 6. The house was his own. The house has been torn down and rebuilt since, and its number has probably been changed in the revolutions of numbering to which the streets of Paris are subject. He occupied an ancient and ample apartment on the first story, between the street and the gardens, covered to the ceiling with fine Gobelin and Beauvais tapestry representing pastoral scenes; the subjects of the ceiling and the panels were repeated in miniature upon the arm-chairs. He surrounded his bed with a large screen with nine leaves varnished with Coromandel lac. Long, full curtains hung at the windows, and made great, magnificent broken folds. The garden, which was immediately beneath his windows, was connected with

the angle between them by means of a staircase of twelve or fifteen steps, which the old man ascended and descended very blithely. In addition to a library adjoining his room, he had a boudoir which he thought very much of, a gay retreat, hung with magnificent straw-colour tapestry, covered with *fleur-de-llys* and with figures from the galleries of Louis XIV., and ordered by M. de Vivonne from his convicts for his mistress. M. Gillenormand had inherited this from a severe maternal great-aunt, who died at the age of a hundred. He had had two wives. His manners held a medium between the courtier, which he had never been, and the counsellor, which he might have been. He was gay, and kind when he wished to be. In his youth, he had been one of those men who are always deceived by their wives and never by their mistresses, because they are at the same time the most disagreeable husbands and the most charming lovers in the world. He was a connoisseur in painting. He had in his room a wonderful portrait of nobody knows who, painted by Jordaens, done in great dabs with the brush, with millions of details, in a confused manner and as if by chance. M. Gillenormand's dress was not in the fashion of Louis XV., nor even in the fashion of Louis XVI.; he wore the costume of the *incroyables* of the Directory. He had thought himself quite young until then, and had kept up with the fashions. His coat was of light cloth, with broad facings, a long swallow tail, and large steel buttons. Add to this short breeches and shoe-buckles. He always carried his hands in his pockets. He said authoritatively, "*The French Revolution is a history of scamps.*"

III.

SUCH was M. Luke Esprit Gillenormand, who had not lost his hair, which was rather grey than white, and always

combed in dog's-ears. To sum up, and with all this, a venerable man.

He was of the eighteenth century, frivolous and great.

In 1814, and in the early years of the Restoration, Monsieur Gillenormand, who was still young—he was only seventy-four—had lived in the Faubourg Saint Germain, Rue Servandoni, near Saint Sulpice. He had retired to the Marais only upon retiring from society, after his eighty years were fully accomplished.

And in retiring from society, he had walled himself up in his habits; the principal one, in which he was invariable, was to keep his door absolutely closed by day, and never to receive anybody whatever, on any business whatever, except in the evening. He dined at five o'clock, then his door was open. This was the custom of his century, and he would not swerve from it. "The day is vulgar," said he, "and only deserves closed shutters. People who are anybody light up their wit when the zenith lights up its stars." And he barricaded himself against everybody, were it even the king. The old elegance of his time.

IV.

THE two daughters of Monsieur Gillenormand were born ten years apart. In their youth they resembled each other very little; and in character as well as in countenance, were as far from being sisters as possible. The younger was a cheerful soul, attracted towards everything that is bright, busy with flowers, poetry, and music, carried away into the glories of space, enthusiastic, ethereal, affianced from childhood in the ideal to a dim heroic figure. The elder had also her chimera; in the azure

depth she saw a contractor, some good, coarse commissary, very rich, a husband splendidly stupid, a million-made man, or even a prefect; receptions at the prefecture, an usher of the antechamber, with the chain on his neck, official balls, harangues at the mayor's, to be "*Madame la préfete*," this whirled in her imagination. The two sisters wandered thus, each in her own fancy, when they were young girls. Both had wings, one like an angel, the other like a goose.

No ambition is fully realized, here below at least. No paradise becomes terrestrial at the period in which we live. The younger had married the man of her dreams, but she was dead. The elder was not married.

At the moment she makes her entry into the story which we are relating, she was an old piece of virtue, an incombustible prude, one of the sharpest noses and one of the most obtuse minds which could be discovered. A characteristic incident. Outside of the immediate family, nobody had ever known her first name. She was called *Mademoiselle Gillenormand the elder*.

In cant, Mademoiselle Gillenormand the elder could have given odds to an English miss. She was immodestly modest. She had one frightful reminiscence in her life: one day a man had seen her garter.

Age had only increased this pitiless modesty. Her dress front was never thick enough, and never rose high enough. She multiplied hooks and pins where nobody thought of looking. The peculiarity of prudery is to multiply sentinels, in proportion as the fortress is less threatened.

However, explain who can these ancient mysteries of innocence, she allowed herself to be kissed without displeasure by an officer of lancers who was her grand-nephew, and whose name was Théodule.

Spite of this favoured lancer, the title *Prude*, under which we have classed her, fitted her absolutely. Mademoiselle

Gillenormand was a kind of twilight soul. Prudery is half a virtue and half a vice.

To prudery she added bigotry, a suitable lining. She was of the fraternity of the Virgin, wore a white veil on certain feast-days, muttered special prayers, revered "the holy blood," venerated "the sacred heart," remained for hours in contemplation before an old-fashioned Jesuit altar in a chapel closed to the vulgar faithful, and let her soul fly away among the little marble clouds and along the grand rays of gilded wood.

She had a chapel friend, an old maid like herself, called Mademoiselle Vaubois, who was perfectly stupid, and in comparison with whom Mademoiselle Gillenormand had the happiness of being an eagle. Beyond her Agnus Deis and her Ave Marias, Mademoiselle Vaubois had no light except upon the different modes of making sweetmeats. Mademoiselle Vaubois, perfect in her kind, was the ermine of stupidity without a single stain of intelligence.

We must say that in growing old, Mademoiselle Gillenormand had rather gained than lost. This is the case with passive natures. She had never been peevish, which is a relative goodness; and then, years wear off angles, and the softening of time had come upon her. She was sad with an obscure sadness of which she had not the secret herself. There was in her whole person the stupor of a life ended but never commenced.

She kept her father's house. Monsieur Gillenormand had his daughter with him, as we have seen Monseigneur Bienvenu have his sister with him. These households of an old man and an old maid are not rare, and always have the touching aspect of two feeblenesses leaning upon each other.

There was, besides, in the house between this old maid and this old man, a child, a little boy, always trembling and mute before M. Gillenormand. M. Gillenormand

never spoke to this child but with stern voice, and sometimes with uplifted cane: "*Here! Monsieur—scamp, good-for-nothing, come here! Answer me, rogue! Let me see you, scapegrace!*" &c., &c. He idolized him.

It was his grandson.

When M. Gillenormand lived in the Rue Servandoni, he frequented several very fine and very noble salons. Although a bourgeois, M. Gillenormand was welcome. As he was twice witty, first with his own wit, then with the wit which was attributed to him, he was even sought after and lionized. He went nowhere save on condition of ruling there. There are men who at any price desire influence and to attract the attention of others; where they cannot be oracles, they make themselves laughing-stocks. Monsieur Gillenormand was not of this nature; his dominance in the royal salons which he frequented cost him none of his self-respect. He was an oracle everywhere.

M. Gillenormand was usually accompanied by his daughter, this long mademoiselle, then past forty, and seeming fifty, and by a beautiful little boy of seven, white, rosy, fresh-looking, with happy and trustful eyes, who never appeared in a saloon without hearing a buzz about him,—“How pretty he is! What a pity! poor child!” This child was the boy to whom we have but just alluded. They called him “poor child” because his father was “a brigand of the Loire.”

This brigand of the Loire was M. Gillenormand’s son-in-law, already mentioned, and whom M. Gillenormand called *the disgrace of his family*.

V.

WHOEVER, at that day, had passed through the little city of Vernon, and walked over that beautiful monumental

bridge which will be very soon replaced, let us hope, by some horrid wire bridge, would have noticed, as his glance fell from the top of the parapet, a man of about fifty, with a leather casque on his head, dressed in pantaloons and waistcoat of coarse grey cloth, to which something yellow was stitched which had been a red ribbon, shod in wooden shoes, browned by the sun, his face almost black and his hair almost white, a large scar upon his forehead extending down his cheek, bent, bowed down, older than his years, walking nearly every day with a spade and a pruning-knife in his hand, in one of those walled compartments, in the vicinity of the bridge, which like a chain of terraces border the left bank of the Seine—charming inclosures full of flowers, of which one would say, if they were much larger, they are gardens, and, if they were a little smaller, they are bouquets. All these inclosures are bounded by the river on one side and by a house on the other. The man in the waistcoat and wooden shoes, of whom we have just spoken, lived, about the year 1817, in the smallest of these inclosures and the humblest of these houses. He lived there solitary and alone, in silence and in poverty, with a woman who was neither young nor old, neither beautiful nor ugly, neither peasant nor bourgeois, who waited upon him. The square of earth which he called his garden was celebrated in the town for the beauty of the flowers which he cultivated in it. Flowers were his occupation.

By dint of labour, perseverance, attention, and pails of water, he had succeeded in creating after the Creator, and had invented certain tulips and dahlias which seemed to have been forgotten by Nature. He was ingenious ; he anticipated Soulange Bodin in the formation of little clumps of heather earth for the culture of rare and precious shrubs from America and China. By break of day, in summer, he was in his walks, digging, pruning, weeding, watering, walking in the midst of his flowers

with an air of kindness, sadness, and gentleness, sometimes dreamy and motionless for whole hours, listening to the song of a bird in a tree, the prattling of a child in a house, or oftener with his eyes fixed on some drop of dew at the end of a spear of grass, of which the sun was making a carbuncle. His table was very frugal, and he drank more milk than wine. An urchin would make him yield, his servant scolded him. He was timid, so much so as to seem unsociable; he rarely went out, and saw nobody but the poor who rapped at his window, and his curé, Abbé Mabeuf, a good old man. Still, if any of the inhabitants of the city, or strangers, whoever they might be, curious to see his tulips and roses, knocked at his little house, he opened his door with a smile. This was the brigand of the Loire.

Whoever, at the same time, had read the military memoirs, the biographies, the *Moniteur*, and the bulletins of the Grand Army, would have been struck by a name which appears rather often, the name of George Pontmercy. When quite young, this George Pontmercy was a soldier in the regiment of Saintonge. The Revolution broke out. The regiment of Saintonge was in the Army of the Rhine. For the old regiments of the Monarchy kept their province names even after the fall of the Monarchy, and were not brigaded until 1794. Pontmercy fought at Spire, at Worms, at Neustadt, at Turkheim, at Alzey, at Mayence, where he was one of the two hundred who formed Houchard's rear-guard. He, with eleven others, held their ground against the Prince of Hesse's corps behind the old rampart of Andernach, and only fell back upon the bulk of the army when the hostile cannon had effected a breach from the top of the parapet to the slope of the glacis. He was under Kleber at Marchiennes, and at the battle of Mont Palissel, where he had his arm broken by a musket-ball. Then he passed to the

Italian frontier, and he was one of the thirty grenadiers who defended the Col di Tende with Joubert. At Eylau, he was in the churchyard where the heroic captain, Louis Hugo, uncle of the author of this book, sustained alone, with his company of eighty-three men, for two hours, the whole effort of the enemy's army. Pontmercy was one of the three who came out of that churchyard alive. He was at Friedland. At Arnay le Duc, a captain, he sabred ten Cossacks, and saved, not his general, but his corporal. He was wounded on that occasion, and twenty-seven splinters were extracted from his left arm alone. Eight days before the capitulation of Paris, he exchanged with a comrade, and entered the cavalry. He had what was called under the old régime *the double-hand*, that is to say, equal skill in managing, as a soldier, the sabre or the musket, as an officer, a squadron or a battalion. It is this skill, perfected by military education, which gives rise to certain special arms—the dragoons, for instance, who are both cavalry and infantry. He accompanied Napoleon to the island of Elba. At Waterloo, he led a squadron of cuirassiers in Dubois' brigade. He it was who took the colours from the Lunenburg battalion. He carried the colours to the Emperor's feet. He was covered with blood. He had received, in seizing the colours, a sabre stroke across his face. The Emperor, well pleased, cried to him, "*You are a Colonel, you are a Baron, you are an Officer of the Legion of Honour!*" Pontmercy answered, "*Sire, I thank you for my widow.*" An hour afterwards he fell in the ravine of Ohain. Now who was this George Pontmercy? He was that very brigand of the Loire.

We have already seen something of his history. After Waterloo, Pontmercy, drawn out, as will be remembered, from the sunken road of Ohain, succeeded in regaining the army, and was passed along from ambulance to ambulance to the cantonments of the Loire.

The Restoration put him on half-pay, then sent him to a residence—that is to say, under surveillance—at Vernon. The King, Louis XVIII., ignoring all that had been done in the Hundred Days, recognized neither his position of officer of the Legion of Honour, nor his rank of colonel, nor his title of baron. He, on his part, neglected no opportunity to sign himself *Colonel Baron Pontmercy*. He had only one old blue coat, and he never went out without putting on the rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honour. The *procureur du roi* notified him that he would be prosecuted for “illegally” wearing this decoration. When this notice was given to him by a friendly intermediary, Pontmercy answered with a bitter smile, “I do not know whether it is that I no longer understand French, or you no longer speak it; but the fact is I do not understand you.” Then he went out every day for a week with his rosette. Nobody dared to disturb him. Two or three times the Minister of War or the General commanding the Department wrote to him with this address, *Monsieur Commandant Pontmercy*. He returned the letters unopened.

One morning he met the *procureur du roi* in one of the streets of Vernon, went up to him and said, “Monsieur *procureur du roi*, am I allowed to wear my scar?”

He had nothing but his very scanty half-pay as chief of squadron. He hired the smallest house he could find in Vernon. He lived there alone; how, we have just seen. Under the Empire, between two wars, he had found time to marry Mademoiselle Gillenormand. The old bourgeois, who really felt outraged, consented with a sigh, saying, “*The greatest families are forced to it.*” In 1815, Madame Pontmercy, an admirable woman in every respect, noble and rare, and worthy of her husband, died, leaving a child. This child would have been the colonel’s joy in his solitude; but the grandfather had imperiously demanded his grandson, declaring that, unless he were given up to him,

he would disinherit him. The father yielded for the sake of the little boy, and not being able to have his child, he set about loving flowers.

He had, moreover, given up everything, making no movement nor conspiring with others. He divided his thoughts between the innocent things he was doing, and the grand things he had done. He passed his time hoping for a pink or remembering Austerlitz.

M. Gillenormand had no intercourse with his son-in-law. The colonel was to him "a bandit," and he was to the colonel "a blockhead." M. Gillenormand never spoke of the colonel, unless sometimes to make mocking allusions to "his barony." It was expressly understood that Pontmercy should never endeavour to see his son or to speak to him, under pain of the boy being turned away, and disinherited. To the Gillenormands, Pontmercy was pestiferous. They intended to bring up the child to their liking. The colonel did wrong, perhaps, to accept these conditions, but he submitted to them, thinking that he was doing right, and sacrificing himself alone.

The inheritance from the grandfather Gillenormand was a small affair, but the inheritance from Mlle. Gillenormand the elder was considerable. This aunt, who had remained single, was very rich from the maternal side, and the son of her sister was her natural heir. The child, whose name was Marius, knew that he had a father, but nothing more. Nobody spoke a word to him about him. However, in the society into which his grandfather took him, the whisperings, the hints, the winks, enlightened the little boy's mind at length; he finally comprehended something of it, and as he naturally imbibed, by a sort of infiltration and slow penetration, the ideas and opinions which formed, so to say, the air he breathed, he came, little by little, to think of his father only with shame and with a closed heart.

While he was thus growing up, every two or three months

the colonel would escape, come furtively to Paris like a fugitive from justice breaking his ban, and go to Saint Sulpice, at the hour when Aunt Gillenormand took Marius to mass. There, trembling lest the aunt should turn round, concealed behind a pillar, motionless, not daring to breathe, he saw his child. The scarred veteran was afraid of the old maid.

From this, in fact, came his connection with the curé of Vernon, Abbé Mabeuf.

This worthy priest was the brother of a warden of Saint Sulpice, who had several times noticed this man gazing upon his child, and the scar on his cheek, and the big tears in his eyes. This man, who had so really the appearance of a man, and who wept like a woman, had attracted the warden's attention. This face remained in his memory. One day, having gone to Vernon to see his brother, he met Colonel Pontmercy on the bridge, and recognized the man of Saint Sulpice. The warden spoke of it to the curé, and the two, under some pretext, made the colonel a visit. This visit led to others. The colonel, who at first was very reserved, finally unbosomed himself, and the curé and the warden came to know the whole story, and how Pontmercy was sacrificing his own happiness to the future of his child. The result was that the curé felt a veneration and tenderness for him, and the colonel, on his part, felt an affection for the curé. And, moreover, when it happens that both are sincere and good, nothing will mix and amalgamate more easily than an old priest and an old soldier. In reality, they are the same kind of man. One has devoted himself to his country upon earth, the other to his country in heaven ; there is no other difference.

Twice a year, on the 1st of January and on St. George's Day, Marius wrote filial letters to his father, which his aunt dictated, and which, one would have said, were copied from some "Complete Letter Writer ;" this was all that

M. Gillenormand allowed ; and the father answered with very tender letters, which the grandfather thrust into his pocket without reading.

VI.

MARIUS PONTMERCY went, like all children, through various studies. When he left the hands of Aunt Gillenormand, his grandfather entrusted him to a worthy professor, of the purest classic innocence. This young, unfolding soul passed from a prude to a pedant. Marius had his years at college, then he entered the law-school. He was royalist, fanatical, and austere. He had little love for his grandfather, whose gaiety and cynicism wounded him, and the place of his father was a dark void.

For the rest, he was an ardent but cool lad, noble, generous, proud, religious, lofty ; honourable even to harshness, pure even to unsociableness.

The completion of Marius' classical studies was coincident with M. Gillenormand's retirement from the world. The old man bade farewell to the Faubourg Saint Germain, and established himself in the Marais, at his house in the Rue des Filles du Calvaire. His servants there were, in addition to the porter, a chambermaid, Nicolette, and a hort-winded and pursy Basque.

In 1827, Marius had just attained his eighteenth year. On coming in, one evening, he saw his grandfather with a letter in his hand.

"Marius," said M. Gillenormand, "you will set out to-morrow for Vernon."

"What for?" said Marius.

"To see your father."

Marius shuddered. He had thought of everything but this, that a day might come when he would have to see his father. Nothing could have been more unlooked for, more surprising, and, we must say, more disagreeable. It was aversion compelled to intimacy. It was not chagrin; no, it was pure drudgery.

Marius, besides his feelings of political antipathy, was convinced that his father, the sabrer, as M. Gillenormand called him in his gentler moments, did not love him; that was clear, since he had abandoned him and left him to others. Feeling that he was not loved at all, he had no love. Nothing more natural, said he to himself.

He was so astounded that he did not question M. Gillenormand. The grandfather continued,—

“It appears that he is sick. He asks for you.”

And after a moment of silence he added,—

“Start to-morrow morning. I think there is at the Cour des Fontaines a conveyance which starts at six o'clock and arrives at night. Take it. He says the case is urgent.”

Then he crumpled up the letter and put it in his pocket. Marius could have started that evening and been with his father the next morning. A diligence then made the trip to Rouen from the Rue du Bouloi by night, passing through Vernon. Neither M. Gillenormand nor Marius thought of inquiring.

The next day, at dusk, Marius arrived at Vernon. Candles were just beginning to be lighted. He asked the first person he met for *the house of Monsieur Pontmercy*. For in his feelings he agreed with the Restoration, and he, too, recognized his father neither as baron nor as colonel.

The house was pointed out to him. He rang; a woman came and opened the door, with a small lamp in her hand.

“Monsieur Pontmercy?” said Marius.

The woman remained motionless.

"Is it here?" asked Marius.

The woman gave an affirmative nod of the head.

"Can I speak with him?"

The woman gave a negative sign.

"But I am his son!" resumed Marius. "He is expecting me."

"He expects you no longer," said the woman.

Then he perceived that she was in tears.

She pointed to the door of a low room; he entered.

In this room, which was lighted by a tallow-candle on the mantel, there were three men, one of them standing, one on his knees, and one stripped to his shirt and lying at full length upon the floor. The one upon the floor was the colonel.

The two others were a physician and a priest, who was praying.

The colonel had been three days before attacked with a brain fever. At the beginning of the sickness, having a presentiment of ill, he had written to Monsieur Gillenormand to ask for his son. He had grown worse. On the very evening of Marius' arrival at Vernon, the colonel had had a fit of delirium; he sprang out of his bed in spite of the servant, crying, "My son has not come! I am going to meet him!" Then he had gone out of his room and fallen upon the floor of the hall. He had but just died.

The doctor and the curé had been sent for. The doctor had come too late, the curé had come too late. The son also had come too late.

By the dim light of the candle, they could distinguish upon the cheek of the pale and prostrate colonel a big tear which had fallen from his death-stricken eye. The eye was glazed, but the tear was not dry. This tear was for his son's delay.

Marius looked upon this man, whom he saw for the first time, and for the last—this venerable and manly face, these

open eyes which saw not, this white hair, these robust limbs upon which he distinguished here and there brown lines which were sabre-cuts, and a species of red scars which were bullet-holes. He looked upon that gigantic scar which imprinted heroism upon this face on which God had impressed goodness. He thought that this man was his father, and that this man was dead, and he remained unmoved.

The sorrow which he experienced was the sorrow which he would have felt before any other man whom he might have seen stretched out in death.

Mourning, bitter mourning, was in that room. The servant was lamenting by herself in a corner, the curé was praying, and his sobs were heard; the doctor was wiping his eyes; the corpse itself wept.

This doctor, this priest, and this woman looked at Marius through their affliction without saying a word; it was he who was the stranger. Marius, too little moved, felt ashamed and embarrassed at his attitude; he had his hat in his hand, he let it fall to the floor, to make them believe that grief deprived him of strength to hold it.

At the same time he felt something like remorse, and he despised himself for acting thus. But was it his fault? He did not love his father, indeed!

The colonel left nothing. The sale of his furniture hardly paid for his burial. The servant found a scrap of paper, which she handed to Marius. It contained this, in the handwriting of the colonel:—

“*For my Son.*—The Emperor made me a baron upon the battle-field of Waterloo. Since the Restoration contests this title, which I have bought with my blood, my son will take it and bear it. I need not say that he will be worthy of it.” On the back, the colonel had added: “At this same battle of Waterloo, a sergeant saved my life. This man’s name is Thénardier. Not long ago, I believe he was keeping a little tavern in a village in the suburbs of

Paris, at Chelles or at Montfermeil. If my son meets him, he will do Thénardier all the service he can."

Not from duty towards his father, but on account of that vague respect for death which is always so imperious in the heart of man, Marius took this paper and pressed it.

No trace remained of the colonel. Monsieur Gillenormand had his sword and uniform sold to a second-hand dealer. The neighbours stripped the garden and carried off the rare flowers. The other plants became briery and scraggy, and died.

Marius remained only forty-eight hours at Vernon. After the burial, he returned to Paris and went back to his law, thinking no more of his father than if he had never lived. In two days the colonel had been buried, and in three days forgotten.

Marius wore **crape** on his hat. **That was all.**

VII.

MARIUS had preserved the religious habits of his childhood. One Sunday he had gone to hear mass at Saint Sulpice, at this same chapel of the Virgin to which his aunt took him when he was a little boy, and being that day more absent-minded and dreamy than usual, he took his place behind a pillar and knelt down, without noticing it, before a Utrecht velvet chair, on the back of which this name was written, *Monsieur Mabeuf, churchwarden*. The mass had hardly commenced when an old man presented himself, and said to Marius—

"Monsieur, this is my place."

Marius moved away readily, and the old man took his chair.

After mass, Marius remained absorbed in thought a few steps distant ; the old man approached him again and said, "I beg your pardon, Monsieur, for having disturbed you a little while ago, and for disturbing you again now ; but you must have thought me impertinent, and I must explain myself."

"Monsieur," said Marius, "it is unnecessary."

"Yes !" resumed the old man ; "I do not wish you to have a bad opinion of me. You see I think a great deal of that place. It seems to me that the mass is better there. Why ? I will tell you. To that place I have seen for ten years, regularly, every two or three months, a poor, brave father come, who had no other opportunity and no other way of seeing his child, being prevented through some family arrangements. He came at the hour when he knew his son was brought to mass. The little one never suspected that his father was here. He did not even know, perhaps, that he had a father, the innocent boy ! The father, for his part, kept behind a pillar, so that nobody should see him. He looked at his child, and wept. This poor man worshipped this little boy. I saw that. This place has become sanctified, as it were, for me, and I have acquired the habit of coming here to hear mass. I prefer it to the bench where I have a right to be as a warden. I was even acquainted slightly with this unfortunate gentleman. He had a father-in-law, a rich aunt, relatives, I do not remember exactly, who threatened to disinherit the child if he, the father, should see him. He had sacrificed himself that his son might some day be rich and happy. They were separated by political opinions. Certainly I approve of political opinions, but there are people who do not know where to stop. Bless me ! because a man was at Waterloo he is not a monster ; a father is not separated from his child for that. He was one of Bonaparte's colonels. He is dead, I believe. He lived at Vernon, where my brother

is curé, and his name is something like Pontmarie, or Pontmercy. He had a handsome sabre-cut."

"Pontmercy," said Marius, turning pale.

"Exactly; Pontmercy. Did you know him?"

"Monsieur," said Marius, "he was my father."

The old churchwarden clasped his hands, and exclaimed,—

"Ah! you are the child! Yes, that is it; he ought to be a man now. Well! poor child, you can say that you had a father who loved you well."

Marius offered his arm to the old man, and walked with him to his house. Next day he said to Monsieur Gillenormand,—

"We have arranged a hunting party with a few friends. Will you permit me to be absent for three days?"

"Four," answered the grandfather; "go; amuse yourself."

And, with a wink, he whispered to his daughter,—

"Some love affair!"

VIII.

WHERE Marius went we shall see a little further on.

Marius was absent three days, then he returned to Paris, went straight to the library of the law-school, and asked for the file of the *Moniteur*.

He read the *Moniteur*; he read all the histories of the Republic and the Empire; the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*; all the memoirs, journals, bulletins, proclamations; he devoured everything. The first time he met his father's name in the bulletins of the Grand Army he had a fever for a whole week. He went to see the generals under whom George Pontmercy had served—among others, Count H.

The church warden, Mabeuf, whom he had gone to see again, gave him an account of the life at Vernon, the Colonel's retreat, his flowers and his solitude. Marius came to understand fully this rare, sublime, and gentle man, this sort of lion-lamb who was his father.

In the meantime, engrossed in this study, which took up all his time, as well as all his thoughts, he hardly saw the Gillenormands more. At the hours of meals he appeared; then, when they looked for him, he was gone. The aunt grumbled. The grandfather smiled. "Poh, poh! it is the age for the lasses!" Sometimes the old man added, "The devil! I thought that it was some gallantry. It seems to be a passion."

It was a passion, indeed. Marius was on the way to adoration for his father.

At the same time an extraordinary change took place in his ideas. The phases of this change were numerous and gradual. As this is the history of many minds of our time, we deem it useful to follow these phases step by step, and to indicate them all.

This history on which he had now cast his eyes startled him.

The first effect was bewilderment.

The Republic, the Empire, had been to him, till then, nothing but monstrous words. The Republic, a guillotine in a twilight; the Empire, a sabre in the night. He had looked into them, and there, where he expected to find only a chaos of darkness, he had seen, with a sort of astounding surprise, mingled with fear and joy, stars shining, Mirabeau, Vergniaud, Saint-Just, Robespierre, Camille Desmoulins, Danton, and a sun rising, Napoleon. He knew not where he was. He recoiled, blinded by the splendours. Little by little the astonishment passed away; he accustomed himself to this radiance; he looked upon acts without dizziness, he examined personages without terror; the Revolution and

the Empire set themselves in luminous perspective before his straining eyes; he saw each of these two groups of events and men arrange themselves into two enormous facts: the Republic into the sovereignty of the civic right restored to the masses, the Empire into the sovereignty of the French idea imposed upon Europe; he saw spring out of the Revolution the grand figure of the people, and out of the Empire the grand figure of France. He declared to himself that all that had been good.

What his bewilderment neglected in this first far too synthetic appreciation, we do not think it necessary to indicate here. We are describing the state of a mind upon the march. Progress is not accomplished at a bound. Saying this, once for all, for what precedes as well as for what is to follow, we continue.

He perceived then that up to that time he had comprehended his country no more than he had his father. He had known neither one nor the other, and he had had a sort of voluntary night over his eyes. He now saw, and on the one hand he admired, on the other he worshipped.

He was full of regret and remorse, and he thought with despair that all he had in his soul he could say now only to a tomb. Oh! if his father were living, if he had had him still, if God in his mercy and in his goodness had permitted that his father might be still alive, how he would have run, how he would have plunged headlong, how he would have cried to his father, "Father! I am here! it is I! my heart is the same as yours! I am your son!" How he would have embraced his white head, wet his hair with tears, gazed upon his scar, pressed his hands, worshipped his garments, kissed his feet! oh! why had this father died so soon, before the adolescence, before the justice, before the love of his son! Marius had a continual sob in his heart which said at every moment, "Alas!" At the same time

he became more truly serious, more truly grave, surer of his faith and his thought. Gleams of the true came at every instant to complete his reasoning. It was like an interior growth. He felt a sort of natural aggrandizement which these two new things, his father and his country, brought to him.

As when one has a key, everything opened; he explained to himself what he had hated, he penetrated what he had abhorred; he saw clearly henceforth the providential, divine, and human meaning of the great things which he had been taught to detest, and the great men whom he had been instructed to curse. When he thought of his former opinions, which were only of yesterday, but which seemed so ancient to him already, he became indignant at himself, and he smiled. From the rehabilitation of his father he had naturally passed to the rehabilitation of Napoleon.

This, however, we must say, was not accomplished without labour.

From childhood he had been imbued with the judgment of the party of 1814 in regard to Bonaparte. Now, all the prejudices of the Restoration, all its interests, all its instincts, tended to the disfigurement of Napoleon. It execrated him still more than it did Robespierre. It made skilful use of the fatigue of the nation and the hatred of mothers. Bonaparte had become a sort of monster almost fabulous, and to depict him to the imagination of the people, which, as we have already said, resembles the imagination of children, the party of 1814 presented in succession every terrifying mask, from that which is terrible, while yet it is grand, to that which is terrible in the grotesque.

On reading his history, especially in studying it in documents and materials, the veil which covered Napoleon from Marius' eyes gradually fell away. He perceived something immense, and suspected that he had been deceiving himself up to that moment about Bonaparte as well as about everything else; each day he saw

more clearly ; and he began to mount slowly, step by step, in the beginning almost with regret, afterwards with rapture, and as if drawn by an irresistible fascination, at first the sombre stages, then the dimly lighted stages, finally the luminous and splendid stages of enthusiasm.

One night he was alone in his little room next the roof. His candle was lighted ; he was reading, leaning on his table by the open window. All manner of reveries came over him from the expanse of space and mingled with his thought. What a spectacle is night ! We hear dull sounds, not knowing whence they come ; we see Jupiter, twelve hundred times larger than the earth, glistening like an ember ; the welkin is black, the stars sparkle ; it is terror-inspiring.

He was reading the bulletins of the Grand Army, those heroic strophes written on the battle-field ; he saw there at intervals his father's name, the Emperor's name everywhere ; the whole of the grand Empire appeared before him ; he felt as if a tide were swelling and rising within him ; it seemed to him at moments that his father was passing by him like a breath, and whispering in his ear ; gradually he grew wandering ; he thought he heard the drums, the cannon, the trumpets, the measured tread of the battalions, the dull and distant gallop of the cavalry ; from time to time he lifted his eyes to the sky and saw the colossal constellations shining in the limitless abysses, then they fell back upon the book, and saw there other colossal things moving about confusedly. His heart was full. He was transported, trembling, breathless ; suddenly, without himself knowing what moved him, or what he was obeying, he arose, stretched his arms out of the window, gazed fixedly into the gloom, the silence, the darkling infinite, the eternal immensity, and cried, "Vive l'Empereur !"

From that moment it was all over : the Corsican ogre—

the usurper—the tyrant—the monster who was the lover of his sisters—the actor who took lessons from Talma—the poisoner of Jaffa—the tiger—Buonaparte—all this vanished, and gave place in his mind to a suffused and brilliant radiance in which shone out from an inaccessible height the pale marble phantom of Cæsar. The Emperor had been to his father only the beloved captain, whom one admires, and for whom one devotes himself; to Marius he was something more. He was the predestined constructor of the French group, succeeding the Roman group in the mastery of the world. He was the stupendous architect of a downfall; the successor of Charlemagne, of Louis XI., of Henry IV., of Richelieu, of Louis XIV., and of the Committee of Public Safety, having doubtless his blemishes, his faults, and even his crimes—that is to say, being man; but august in his faults, brilliant in his blemishes, mighty in his crimes.

We see, like all new converts to a religion, his conversion intoxicated him, he plunged headlong into adhesion, and he went too far. His nature was such; once upon a descent it was almost impossible for him to hold back. Fanaticism for the sword took possession of him, and became complicated in his mind with enthusiasm for the idea. He did not perceive that along with genius, and indiscriminately, he was admiring force—that is to say, that he was installing in the two compartments of his idolatry, on one side what is divine, and on the other what is brutal.

However this might be, a great step had been taken. Where he had formerly seen the fall of the Monarchy, he now saw the advent of France. His pole-star was changed. What had been the setting was now the rising of the sun. He had turned round.

All these revolutions were accomplished in him without a suspicion of it in his family.

When, in this mysterious labour, he had entirely cast off his old Bourbon and ultra skin, when he had shed the aristocrat, the Jacobite, and the Royalist, when he was fully revolutionary, thoroughly democratic, and almost Republican, he went to an engraver on the Quai des Orfèvres, and ordered a hundred cards bearing this name, *Baron Marius Pontmercy*.

This was but a very logical consequence of the change which had taken place in him—a change in which everything gravitated about his father.

However, as he knew nobody, and could not leave his cards at anybody's door, he put them in his pocket.

By another natural consequence, in proportion as he drew nearer to his father, his memory, and the things for which the colonel had fought for twenty-five years, he drew off from his grandfather. As we have mentioned, for a long time M. Gillenormand's capriciousness had been disagreeable to him. There was already between them all the distaste of a serious young man for a frivolous old man. Geront's gaiety shocks and exasperates Werther's melancholy. So long as the same political opinions and the same ideas had been common to them, Marius had met M. Gillenormand by means of them as if upon a bridge. When this bridge fell, the abyss appeared. And then, above all, Marius felt inexpressibly revolted when he thought that M. Gillenormand, from stupid motives, had pitilessly torn him from the colonel, thus depriving the father of the child, and the child of the father.

Through affection and veneration for his father, Marius had almost reached aversion for his grandfather.

Nothing of this, however, as we have said, was betrayed externally. Only he was more and more frigid ; laconic at meals, and scarcely ever in the house. When his aunt scolded him for it, he was very mild, and gave as an excuse his studies, courts, examinations, dissertations, &c.

The grandfather did not change his infallible diagnosis,—
“In love? I understand it.”

Marius was absent for a while from time to time.

“Where can he go to?” asked the aunt.

On one of these journeys, which were always very short, he went to Montfermeil, in obedience to the injunction which his father had left him, and sought for the former sergeant of Waterloo—the innkeeper Thénardier. Thénardier had failed, the inn was closed, and nobody knew what had become of him. While making these researches, Marius was away from the house four days.

“Decidedly,” said the grandfather, “he is going astray.”

They thought they noticed that he wore something upon his breast and under his shirt, hung from his neck by a black ribbon.

IX.

WE have spoken of a lancer.

He was a grand-nephew of M. Gillenormand's on the paternal side, who passed his life away from his family, and far from all domestic hearths in garrison. Lieutenant Théodule Gillenormand fulfilled all the conditions required for what is called a handsome officer. He had “the waist of a girl,” a way of trailing the victorious sabre, and a curling moustache. He came to Paris very rarely, so rarely that Marius had never seen him. The two cousins knew each other only by name. Théodule was, we think we have mentioned, the favourite of Aunt Gillenormand, who preferred him because she did not see him. Not seeing people permits us to imagine in them every perfection.

One morning, Mlle. Gillenormand the elder had retired

to her room as much excited as her placidity allowed. Marius had asked his grandfather again for permission to make a short journey, adding that he intended to set out that evening. "Go!" the grandfather had answered, and M. Gillenormand had added aside, lifting his eyebrows to the top of his forehead, "He is getting to be an old offender." Mlle. Gillenormand had returned to her room very much perplexed, dropping this exclamation point on the stairs, "That is pretty!" and this interrogation point, "But where can he be going?" She imagined some more or less illicit affair of the heart, a woman in the shadow, a rendezvous, a mystery, and she would not have been sorry to thrust her spectacles into it. The taste of a mystery resembles the first freshness of a slander; holy souls never despise that. There is in the secret compartments of bigotry some curiosity for scandal.

She was therefore a prey to a blind desire for learning a story.

As a diversion from this curiosity which was giving her a little more agitation than she allowed herself, she took refuge in her talents, and began to festoon cotton upon cotton, in one of those embroideries of the time of the Empire and the Restoration in which a great many cab-wheels appear. Clumsy work, crabbed worker. She had been sitting in her chair for some hours when the door opened. Mlle. Gillenormand raised her eyes; Lieutenant Théodule was before her making the regulation bow. She uttered a cry of pleasure. You may be old, you may be prude, you may be a bigot, you may be his aunt, but it is always pleasant to see a lancer enter your room.

"You here, Théodule!" exclaimed she

"On my way, aunt."

"Embrace me, then."

"Here goes!" said Théodule.

And he embraced her. Aunt Gillenormand went to her secretary and opened it.

"You stay with us at least all the week?"

"Aunt, I leave this evening."

"Impossible!"

"Mathematically."

"Stay, my dear Théodule, I beg you."

"The heart says yes, but my orders say no. The story is simple. Our station is changed; we were at Melun, we are sent to Gaillon. To go from the old station to the new, we must pass through Paris. I said, 'I am going to go and see my aunt.'"

"Take this for your pains."

She put ten louis into his hand.

"You mean for my pleasure, dear aunt."

Théodule embraced her a second time, and she had the happiness of having her neck a little chafed by the braid of his uniform.

"Do you make the journey on horseback with your regiment?" she asked.

"No, aunt. I wanted to see you. I have a special permit. My servant takes my horse; I go by the diligence. And, speaking of that, I have a question to ask you."

"What?"

"My cousin, Marius Pontmercy, is travelling also, is he?"

"How do you know that?" exclaimed the aunt, her curiosity suddenly excited to the quick.

"On my arrival, I went to the diligence to secure my place in the *coupé*."

"Well?"

"A traveller had already secured a place on the *impériale*; I saw his name on the book."

"What name?"

"Marius Pontmercy."

"The wicked fellow!" exclaimed the aunt. "Ah! your cousin is not a steady boy like you. To think that he is going to spend the night in a diligence!"

"Like me."

"But, for you, it is from duty; for him, it is from dissipation."

"What is the odds?" said Théodule.

Here an event occurred in the life of Mademoiselle Gillenormand the elder; she had an idea. If she had been a man, she would have slapped her forehead. She apostrophized Théodule,—

"Are you sure that your cousin does not know you?"

"Yes. I have seen him. but he has never deigned to notice me."

"And you are going to travel together so?"

"He on the *impériale*; I in the *coupé*."

"Where does this diligence go?"

"To Les Andelys."

"Is that where Marius is going?"

"Unless, like me, he stops on the road. I get off at Vernon to take the branch for Gaillon. I know nothing of Marius's route."

"Marius! what an ugly name! What an idea it was to name him Marius! But you at least—your name is Théodule!"

"I would rather it were Alfred," said the officer.

"Listen, Théodule."

"I am listening, aunt."

"Pay attention."

"I am paying attention."

"Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Well, Marius is often away."

"Eh ! eh !"

"He travels."

"Ah ! ah !"

"He sleeps away."

"Oh ! oh !"

"We want to know what is at the bottom of it."

Théodule answered with the calmness of a man of bronze,—

"Some petticoat."

And with that stifled chuckle which reveals certainty, he added,—

"A lass."

"That is clear," exclaimed the aunt, who thought she heard Monsieur Gillenormand speak, and who felt her conviction spring irresistibly from this word *lass*, uttered almost in the same tone by the grand-uncle and the grand-nephew. She resumed,—

"Do us a kindness. Follow Marius a little way. He does not know you, it will be easy for you. Since there is a lass, try to see the lass. You can write us the account. It will amuse grandfather."

Théodule had no excessive taste for this sort of watching ; but he was much affected by the ten louis, and he thought he saw a possible succession of them. He accepted the commission and said, "As you please, aunt." And he added aside, "There, I am a duenna."

Mademoiselle Gillenormand embraced him.

"You would not play such pranks, Théodule. You are obedient to discipline, you are the slave of your orders, you are a scrupulous and dutiful man, and you would not leave your family to go to see such a creature."

The lancer put on the satisfied grimace of Cartouche praised for his honesty.

Marius, on the evening which followed this dialogue,

mounted the diligence without suspecting that he was watched. As to the watchman, the first thing that he did was to fall asleep. His slumber was sound and indicated a clear conscience. Argus snored all night.

At daybreak, the driver of the diligence shouted, "Vernon! Vernon relay! passengers for Vernon?" And Lieutenant Théodule awoke.

"Good," growled he, half asleep, "here I get off."

Then, his memory clearing up by degrees, an effect of awakening, he remembered his aunt, the ten louis, and the account he was to render of Marius's acts and deeds. It made him laugh.

"Perhaps he has left the coach," thought he, while he buttoned up his undress waistcoat. "He may have stopped at Poissy; he may have stopped at Triel; if he did not get off at Meulan, he may have got off at Mantes, unless he got off at Rolleboise, or unless he only came to Pacy, with the choice of turning to the left towards Evreux, or to the right towards Laroche Guyon. Run after him, aunt. What the devil shall I write to her, the good old woman?"

At this moment a pair of black pantaloons, getting down from the *impériale* appeared before the window of the *coupé*.

"Can that be Marius?" said the Lieutenant.

It was Marius.

A little peasant girl, beside the coach, among the horses and postilions, was offering flowers to the passengers. "Flowers for your ladies," cried she.

Marius approached her, and bought the most beautiful flowers in her basket.

"Now," said Théodule, leaping down from the coach, "there is something that interests me. Who the deuce is he going to carry those flowers to? It ought to be a mighty pretty woman for so fine a bouquet. I would like to see her."

And, no longer now by command, but from personal curiosity, like those dogs who hunt on their own account, he began to follow Marius.

Marius paid no attention to Théodule. Some elegant women got out of the diligence ; he did not look at them. He seemed to see nothing about him.

"Is he in love?" thought Théodule.

Marius walked towards the church.

"All right," said Théodule to himself. "The church ! that is it. These rendezvous, which are spiced with a bit of mass, are the best of all. Nothing is so exquisite as an ogle which passes across the good God."

Arriving at the church, Marius did not go in, but went behind the building. He disappeared at the corner of one of the buttresses of the apsis.

"The rendezvous is outside," said Théodule. "Let us see the lass."

And he advanced on tiptoe towards the corner which Marius had turned.

On reaching it he stopped, astounded.

Marius, his face hid in his hands, was kneeling in the grass, upon a grave. He had scattered his bouquet. At the end of the grave, at an elevation which marked the head, there was a black wooden cross, with this name in white letters, COLONEL BARON PONTMERCY. He heard Marius sobbing.

'The lass was a tomb.

X.

It was here that Marius had come the first time that he absented himself from Paris. It was here that he returned every time that M. Gillenormand said, he sleeps out.

Lieutenant Théodule was absolutely disconcerted by this unexpected encounter with a sepulchre ; he experienced a disagreeable and singular sensation which he was incapable of analyzing, and which was made up of respect for a tomb mingled with respect for a colonel. He retreated, leaving Marius alone in the churchyard, and there was something of discipline in this retreat. Death appeared to him with huge epaulets, and he gave him almost a military salute. Not knowing what to write to his aunt, he decided to write nothing at all ; and probably nothing would have resulted from the discovery made by Théodule in regard to Marius's amours had not, by one of those mysterious arrangements so frequently accidental, the scene at Vernon been almost immediately followed by a sort of counter-blow at Paris.

Marius returned from Vernon early in the morning of the third day, was set down at his grandfather's, and, fatigued by the two nights passed in the diligence, feeling the need of making up for his lack of sleep by an hour at the swimming school, ran quickly up to his room, took only time enough to lay off his travelling coat and the black ribbon which he wore about his neck, and went away to the bath.

M. Gillenormand, who had risen early, like all old persons who are in good health, had heard him come in, and hastened as fast as he could with his old legs to climb to the top of the stairs where Marius's room was, that he might embrace him, question him while embracing him, and find out something about where he came from.

But the youth had taken less time to go down than the octogenarian to go up, and when Grandfather Gillenormand entered the garret room, Marius was no longer there.

The bed was not disturbed, and upon the bed were displayed without distrust the coat and the black ribbon.

"I like that better," said M. Gillenormand.

And a moment afterwards he entered the parlour where

Mademoiselle Gillenormand the elder was already seated, embroidering her cab-wheels.

The entrance was triumphal.

M. Gillenormand held in one hand the coat, and in the other the neck-ribbon, and cried,—

“Victory! We are going to penetrate the mystery! we shall know the end of the end, we shall feel of the libertinism of our trickster! here we are with the romance even. I have the portrait!”

In fact, a black shagreen box, much like to a medallion, was fastened to the ribbon.

The old man took this box and looked at it some time without opening it, with that air of desire, ravishment, and anger with which a poor, hungry devil sees an excellent dinner pass under his nose, when it is not for him.

“For it is evidently a portrait. I know all about that. This is worn tenderly upon the heart. What fools they are! Some abominable queen, enough to make one shudder probably! Young folks have such bad taste in these days!”

“Let us see, father,” said the old maid.

The box opened by pressing a spring. They found nothing in it but a piece of paper carefully folded.

“*From the same to the same*,” said M. Gillenormand, bursting with laughter. “I know what that is. A love-letter!”

“Ah! then let us read it,!” said the aunt.

And she put on her spectacles. They unfolded the paper, and read this:—

“*For my Son*.—The Emperor made me a baron upon the battle-field of Waterloo. Since the Restoration contests this title which I have bought with my blood, my son will take it and bear it. I need not say that he will be worthy of it.”

The feelings of the father and daughter cannot be

described. They felt chilled as by the breath of a death's head. They did not exchange a word. M. Gillenormand, however, said in a low voice, and as if talking to himself—

“It is the handwriting of that sabrer.”

The aunt examined the paper, turned it on all sides, then put it back in the box.

Just at that moment a little oblong package, wrapped in blue paper, fell from a pocket of the coat. Mademoiselle Gillenormand picked it up and unfolded the blue paper. It was Marius's hundred cards. She passed one of them to M. Gillenormand, who read, *Baron Marius Pontmercy*.

The old man rang. Nicolette came. M. Gillenormand took the ribbon, the box, and the coat, threw them all on the floor in the middle of the parlour, and said,—

“Take away those things.”

A full hour passed in complete silence. The old man and the old maid sat with their backs turned to one another, and were probably, each on their side, thinking over the same things. At the end of that hour Aunt Gillenormand said,—

“Pretty!”

A few minutes afterwards Marius made his appearance. He came in. Even before crossing the threshold of the parlour he perceived his grandfather holding one of his cards in his hand, who, on seeing him, exclaimed with his crushing air of sneering, bourgeois superiority,—

“Stop! stop! stop! stop! stop! you are a baron now. I present you my compliments. What does this mean?”

Marius coloured slightly, and answered,—

“It means that I am my father's son.”

M. Gillenormand checked his laugh, and said harshly,—

“Your father; I am your father.”

“My father,” resumed Marius with downcast eyes and stern manner, “was a humble and heroic man, who served the Republic and France gloriously, who was great in the

greatest history that men have ever made, who lived a quarter of a century in the camp, by day under grape and under balls, by night in the snow, in the mud, and in the rain, who captured colours, who received twenty wounds, who died forgotten and abandoned, and who had but one fault—that was in loving too dearly two ingrates, his country and me.”

This was more than M. Gillenormand could listen to. At the word *Republic* he rose, or rather sprang to his feet. Every one of the words which Marius had pronounced had produced the effect upon the old Royalist's face of a blast from a bellows upon a burning coal. From dark he had become red, from red purple, and from purple glowing.

“Marius!” exclaimed he, “abominable child! I don't know what your father was! I don't want to know! I know nothing about him, and I don't know him! but what I do know is, that there was never anything but miserable wretches among all that rabble! that they were all beggars, assassins, red-caps, thieves! I say all! I say all! I know nobody! I say all! do you hear, Marius? Look you, indeed, you are as much a baron as my slipper! they were all bandits who served Robespierre! all brigands who served B-u-o-naparte! all traitors who betrayed, betrayed, betrayed! their legitimate king! all cowards who ran from the Prussians and English at Waterloo! That is what I know. If your father is among them I don't know him—I am sorry for it—so much the worse—your servant!”

In his turn, Marius now became the coal, and M. Gillenormand the bellows. Marius shuddered in every limb, he knew not what to do, his head burned. He was the priest who sees all his wafers thrown to the winds, the fakir who sees a passer-by spit upon his idol. He could not allow such things to be said before him unanswered. But what could he do? His father had been trodden under foot

and stamped upon in his presence, but by whom? by his grandfather. How should he avenge the one without outraging the other? It was impossible for him to insult his grandfather, and it was equally impossible for him not to avenge his father. On one hand a sacred tomb, on the other white hairs. He was for a few moments dizzy and staggering with all this whirlwind in his head; then he raised his eyes, looked straight at his grandfather, and cried in a thundering voice,—

“Down with the Bourbons, and that great hog Louis XVIII.!”

Louis XVIII. had been dead for four years; but it was all the same to him.

The old man, scarlet as he was, suddenly became whiter than his hair. He turned towards a bust of the Duke de Berry which stood upon the mantel, and bowed to it profoundly with a sort of peculiar majesty. Then he walked twice, slowly and in silence, from the fireplace to the window, and from the window to the fireplace, traversing the whole length of the room and making the floor crack as if an image of stone were walking over it. The second time he bent towards his daughter, who was enduring the shock with the stupor of an aged sheep, and said to her with a smile that was almost calm,—

“A baron like Monsieur and a bourgeois like me cannot remain under the same roof.”

And all at once straightening up, pallid, trembling, terrible, his forehead swelling with the fearful radiance of anger, he stretched his arm towards Marius and cried to him,—

“Be off!”

Marius left the house.

The next day M. Gillenormand said to his daughter,—

“You will send sixty pistoles every six months to this blood-drinker, and never speak of him to me again.”

Having an immense residuum of fury to expend, and not knowing what to with it, he spoke to his daughter with coldness for more than three months.

Marius, for his part, departed in indignation. A circumstance, which we must mention, had aggravated his exasperation still more. There are always such little fatalities complicating domestic dramas. Feelings are embittered by them, although in reality the faults are none the greater. In hurriedly carrying away, at the old man's command, Marius's "things" to his room, Nicolette had, without perceiving it, dropped, probably on the garret stairs, which were dark, the black shagreen medallion which contained the paper written by the colonel. Neither the paper nor the medallion could be found. Marius was convinced that "Monsieur Gillenormand"—from that day forth he never named him otherwise—had thrown "his father's will" into the fire. He knew by heart the few lines written by the colonel, and consequently nothing was lost. But the paper, the writing, that sacred relic, all that was his heart itself. What had been done with it?

Marius went away without saying where he was going, and without knowing where he was going, with thirty francs, his watch, and a few clothes in a carpet-bag. He hired a cabriolet by the hour, jumped in, and drove at random towards the Latin Quarter.

What was Marius to do?





Book Second

THE FRIENDS OF THE A B C.

I.

AT that period, apparently indifferent, something of a revolutionary thrill was vaguely felt. Whispers coming from the depths of '89 and of '92 were in the air. Young Paris was, excuse the expression, in the process of moulting. People were transformed almost without suspecting it, by the very movement of the time. The hand which moves over the dial moves also among souls. Each one took the step forward which was before him. Royalists became liberals, liberals became democrats.

At that time there were not yet in France any of those underlying organizations like the German Tugendbund and the Italian Carbonari ; but here and there obscure excavations were branching out. La Cougourde was assuming form at Aix ; there was in Paris, among other affiliations of this kind, the Society of the Friends of the A B C.

Who were the Friends of the A B C ? A society having as its aim, in appearance, the education of children ; in reality, the elevation of men.

They declared themselves the Friends of the A B C.* The *abaissé* (the abased) were the people. They wished to raise them up. A pun at which you should not laugh. Puns are sometimes weighty in politics.

The Friends of the A B C were not numerous, it was a secret society in the embryonic state; we should almost say a coterie, if coteries produced heroes. They met in Paris, at two places, near the Halles, in a wine shop called *Corinthe*, which will be referred to hereafter, and near the Pantheon, in a little coffee-house on the Place Saint Michel, called *Le Café Musain*, now torn down. The first of these two places of rendezvous was near the working-men, the second near the students.

The ordinary conventicles of the Friends of the A B C were held in a back room of the Café Musain.

This room, quite distant from the café, with which it communicated by a very long passage, had two windows, and an exit by a private stairway upon the little Rue des Grès. They smoked, drank, played, and laughed there. They talked very loud about everything, and in whispers about something else. On the wall was nailed—an indication sufficient to awaken the suspicion of a police officer—an old map of France under the Republic.

Most of the Friends of the A B C were students, in thorough understanding with a few working-men. The names of the principal are as follow. They belong to a certain extent to history:—Enjolras, Combeferre, Jean Prouvaire, Feuilly, Courfeyrac, Bahorel, Lesgle or Laigle, Joly, Grataire.

These young men constituted a sort of family among themselves, by force of friendship. All except Laigle were from the South.

* A B C in French is pronounced ah-bay-say, exactly like the French word *abaissé*.

This was a remarkable group. It has vanished into the invisible depths which are behind us. At the point of this drama which we have now reached, it may not be useless to throw a ray of light upon these young heads before the reader sees them sink into the shadow of a tragic fate.

Enjolras, whom we have named first, the reason why will be seen by-and-by, was an only son and was rich.

Enjolras was a charming young man, who was capable of being terrible. He was angelically beautiful. He was Antinous wild. You would have said, to see the thoughtful reflection of his eye, that he had already, in some preceding existence, passed through the revolutionary Apocalypse. He had the tradition of it like an eye-witness. He knew all the little details of the grand thing, a pontifical and warrior nature, strange in a youth. He was officiating and militant; from the immediate point of view, a soldier of democracy; above the movement of the time, a priest of the ideal. He had a deep eye, lids a little red, thick under lip, easily becoming disdainful, and a high forehead. Much forehead in a face is like much sky in a horizon. Like certain young men of the beginning of this century and the end of the last century, who became illustrious in early life, he had an exceedingly youthful look, as fresh as a young girl's, although he had hours of pallor. He was now a man, but he seemed a child still. His twenty-two years of age appeared seventeen; he was serious, he did not seem to know that there was on the earth a being called woman. He had but one passion, the right; but one thought, to remove all obstacles.

Besides Enjolras, who represented the logic of the Revolution, Combeferre represented its philosophy. Between the logic of the Revolution and its philosophy there is this difference—that its logic could conclude with war, while

its philosophy could only end in peace. Combeferre completed and corrected Enjolras. He was lower and broader. His desire was to instil into all minds the broad principles of general ideas ; he said, " Revolution, but civilization ;" and about the steep mountain he spread the vast blue horizon. Hence, in all Combeferre's views, there was something attainable and practicable. Revolution with Combeferre was more respirable than with Enjolras. Enjolras expressed its divine right, and Combeferre its natural right. The first went as far as Robespierre ; the second stopped at Condorcet.

Combeferre was learned, purist, precise, universal, a hard student, and at the same time given to musing, " even chimerical," said his friends. He believed in all the dreams : railroads, the suppression of suffering in surgical operations, the fixing of the image in the camera obscura, the electric telegraph, the steering of balloons. Little dismayed, moreover, by the citadels built upon all sides against the human race by superstitions, despotisms, and prejudices, he was one of those who think that science will at last turn the position. Enjolras was a chief ; Combeferre was a guide. You would have preferred to fight with the one and march with the other.

Jean Prouvaire was yet a shade more subdued than Combeferre. He called himself Jehan, from that little momentary fancifulness which mingled with the deep and powerful movement from which arose the study of the Middle Ages, then so necessary. Jean Prouvaire was addicted to love ; he cultivated a pot of flowers, played on the flute, made verses, loved the people, mourned over woman, wept over childhood, confounded the future and God in the same faith, and blamed the Revolution for having cut off a royal head, that of André Chénier. His voice was usually delicate, but at times suddenly became masculine. He was well read, keen to erudition, and

almost an orientalist. Above all, he was good, and, a very natural thing to one who knows how near goodness borders upon grandeur, in poetry he preferred the grand. Like Enjolras, he was rich, and an only son. He spoke gently, bent his head, cast down his eyes, smiled with embarrassment, dressed badly, had an awkward air, blushed at nothing, was very timid, still intrepid.

Feuilly was a fan-maker, an orphan, who with difficulty earned three francs a day, and who had but one thought—to deliver the world. He had still another desire—to instruct himself; which he also called deliverance. He had taught himself to read and write; all that he knew, he had learned alone. Feuilly was a generous heart. He had an immense embrace. This orphan had adopted the people. Being without a mother, he had meditated upon his mother country. He was not willing that there should be any man upon the earth without a country. He nurtured within himself, with the deep divination of the man of the people, what we now call *the idea of nationality*.

Courfeyrac had a father whose name was M. de Courfeyrac. One of the false ideas of the Restoration in point of aristocracy and nobility was its faith in the particle. The particle, we know, has no significance. But the bourgeois of the time of *La Minerve* considered this poor *de* so highly that men thought themselves obliged to renounce it. We might almost, in what concerns Courfeyrac, stop here, and content ourselves with saying as to the remainder—Courfeyrac, *see* Tholomyès.

Courfeyrac had, in fact, that youthful animation which we might call the diabolic beauty of the mind. In later life this dies out, like the playfulness of the kitten, and all that grace ends, on two feet in the bourgeois, and on four paws in the mouser.

Enjolras was the chief, Combeferre was the guide, Courfeyrac was the centre. The others gave more light,

he gave more heat: the truth is, that he had **all the** qualities of a centre—roundness and radiance.

Bahorel had figured in the bloody tumult of June, 1822, on the occasion of the burial of young Lallemand. He was a creature of good humour and bad company, brave, a spendthrift, prodigal almost to generosity, talkative almost to eloquence, bold almost to effrontery; the best possible devil's-pie; with foolhardy waistcoats and scarlet opinions; a wholesale blusterer—that is to say, *liking* nothing so well as a quarrel unless it were an émeute, and nothing so well as an émeute unless it were a revolution; always ready to break a paving-stone, then to tear up a street, then to demolish a government, to see the effect of it—a student of the eleventh year.

Bahorel, a capricious man, was scattered over several cafés; the others had habits, he had none. He loafed. To err is human; to loaf is Parisian. At bottom, a penetrating mind, and more of a thinker than he seemed.

He served as a bond between the Friends of the A B C and some other groups which were without definite shape, but which were to take form afterwards.

In this conclave of young heads there was one bald member, son of a postmaster at Meaux, named Légle.

His comrades, for the sake of brevity, called him Bossuet.*

Bossuet was a cheery fellow who was unlucky. His specialty was to succeed in nothing. On the other hand, he laughed at everything. At twenty-five he was bald. His father had died owning a house and some land; but he, the son, had found nothing more urgent than to lose this house and land in a bad speculation. He had nothing left. He had considerable knowledge and wit, but he

* This is a pun upon the sobriquet of the famous French preacher Bossuet, who was Bishop of Meaux, and hence surnamed "L'Aigle de Meaux," or "the Eagle of Meaux."

always miscarried. Everything failed him, everything deceived him; whatever he built up fell upon him. If he split wood, he cut his finger. If he had a mistress, he very soon discovered that he had also a friend. Every moment some misfortune happened to him; hence his joviality.

Joly was a young *Malade Imaginaire*. What he had learned in medicine was rather to be a patient than a physician. At twenty-three, he thought himself a *vale-tudinarian*, and passed his time in looking at his tongue in a mirror.

All these young men, diverse as they were, and of whom, as a whole, we ought only to speak seriously, had the same religion—Progress.

All were legitimate sons of the French Revolution. The lightest became solemn when pronouncing this date—'89. Their fathers according to the flesh were, or had been, *Feuillants*, *Royalists*, *Doctrinaires*; it mattered little; this hurly-burly which antedated them, had nothing to do with them; they were young; the pure blood of principles flowed in their veins. They attached themselves without an intermediate shade to incorruptible right and to absolute duty.

Affiliated and initiated, they secretly sketched out their ideas.

Among all these passionate hearts and all these undoubting minds there was one sceptic. How did he happen to be there?—from juxtaposition. The name of this sceptic was *Grantaire*, and he usually signed with this rebus—R [*grand R*, great R]. *Grantaire* was a man who took good care not to believe anything. He was, moreover, one of the students who had learned most during their course in Paris.

All these phrases—rights of the people, rights of man, social contract, French Revolution, republic, democracy, humanity, civilization, religion, progress, were, to *Grantaire*,

very nearly meaningless. He smiled at them. Scepticism, that caries of the intellect, had not left one entire idea in his mind. He lived in irony. This was his axiom: There is only one certainty, my full glass. He ridiculed all devotion, under all circumstances.

Still, this sceptic had a fanaticism. This fanaticism was neither an idea nor a dogma, nor an art, nor a science; it was a man—Enjolras. Grantaire admired, loved, and venerated Enjolras.

Enjolras, being a believer, disdained this sceptic, and being sober, scorned this drunkard. He granted him a little haughty pity. Grantaire was an unaccepted Pylades. Always rudely treated by Enjolras, harshly repelled, rejected, yet returning, he said of Enjolras "What a fine statue!"

II.

ON a certain afternoon, which had, as we shall see, some coincidence with events before related, Laigle de Meaux was leaning lazily back against the doorway of the Café Musain. He had the appearance of a caryatid in vacation; he was supporting nothing but his reverie. He was looking at the Place Saint Michel. Leaning back is a way of lying down standing which is not disliked by dreamers. Laigle de Meaux was thinking, without melancholy, of a little mishap which had befallen him the day before at the law school, and which modified his personal plans for the future—plans which were, moreover, rather indefinite.

Reverie does not hinder a cabriolet from going by, nor the dreamer from noticing the cabriolet. Laigle de Meaux, whose eyes were wandering in a sort of general stroll, perceived through all his somnambulism, a two-wheeled

vehicle turning into the square, which was moving at a walk, as if undecided. What did this cabriolet want? why was it moving at a walk? Laigle looked at it. There was inside, beside the driver, a young man, and before the young man, a large carpet-bag. The bag exhibited to the passers this name, written in big black letters upon a card sewed to the cloth—**MARIUS PONTMERCY.**

This name changed Laigle's attitude. He straightened up and addressed this apostrophe to the young man in the cabriolet,—

“Monsieur Marius Pontmercy?”

The cabriolet, thus called upon, stopped.

The young man, who also seemed to be profoundly musing, raised his eyes.

“Well?” said he.

“You are Monsieur Marius Pontmercy?”

“Certainly.”

“I was looking for you,” said Laigle de Meaux.

“How is that?” inquired Marius; for he it was, in fact, he had just left his grandfather's, and he had before him a face which he saw for the first time. “I do not know you.”

“Nor I either. I do not know you,” answered Laigle.

Marius thought he had met a buffoon, and that this was the beginning of a mystification in the middle of the street. He was not in a pleasant humour just at that moment. He knit his brows; Laigle de Meaux, imperturbable, continued,—

“You were not at school yesterday.”

“It is possible.”

“It is certain.”

“You are a student?” inquired Marius.

“Yes, Monsieur. Like you. Day before yesterday I happened to go into the school. You know, one sometimes has such notions. The professor was about to call

the roll. You know that they are very ridiculous **just at** that time. If you miss the third call, they erase your name. Sixty francs gone."

Marius began to listen. Laigle continued,—

"It was Blondeau who was calling the roll. You know Blondeau; he has a very sharp and very malicious nose, and delights in smelling out the absent. He slyly commenced with the letter P. I was not listening, not being concerned in that letter. The roll went on well, no erasure, the universe was present, Blondeau was sad. I said to myself, 'Blondeau, my love, you won't do the slightest execution to-day.' Suddenly, Blondeau calls *Marius Pontmercy*; nobody answers. Blondeau, full of hope, repeats louder: *Marius Pontmercy*? And he seizes his pen. Monsieur, I have some feeling. I said to myself rapidly, 'Here is a brave fellow who is going to be erased. Attention. This is a real live fellow who is not punctual. He is not a good boy. He is not a book-worm, a student who studies a white-billed pedant, strong on science, letters, theology, and wisdom, one of those numskulls drawn out with four pins; a pin for each faculty. He is an honourable idler who loafs, who likes to rusticate, who cultivates the grisette, who pays his court to beauty, who is perhaps, at this very moment, with my mistress. Let us save him. Death to Blondeau!' At that moment Blondeau dipped his pen, black with erasures, into the ink, cast his tawny eye over the room, and repeated for the third time, *Marius Pontmercy*! I answered, *Present*! In that way you **were not** erased."

"Monsieur!—" said Marius.

"And I was," added Laigle de Meaux.

"I do not understand you," said Marius.

Laigle resumed,—

"Nothing more simple. I was near the chair **to answer**, and near the door to escape. The professor was looking

at me with a certain fixedness. Suddenly, Blondeau, who must be the malignant nose of which Boileau speaks, leaps to the letter L. **L** is my letter; I am of Meaux, and **my** name is Lesgle."

"L'Aigle!" interrupted Marius, "what a fine name."

"Monsieur, the Blondeau re-echoes this fine name and cries, *Laigle!* I answer, *Present!* Then Blondeau looks at me with the gentleness of a tiger, smiles, and says, 'If you are Pontmercy, you are not Laigle.' A phrase which is uncomplimentary to you, but which brought me only to grief. So saying, he erases me."

Marius exclaimed,—

"Monsieur, I am mortified——"

"First of all," interrupted Laigle, "I beg leave to embalm Blondeau in a few words of feeling eulogy. I suppose him dead. There wouldn't be much to change in his thinness, his paleness, his coldness, his stiffness, and his odour. And I say: *Erudimini qui judicatis terram.* Here lies Blondeau, Blondeau the Nose, Blondeau Nasica, the ox of discipline, *bos disciplinæ*, the Molossus of his orders, the angel of the roll, who was straight, square, exact, rigid, honest, and hideous. God has erased him as he erased me."

Marius resumed,—

"I am very sorry——"

"Young man," said Laigle of Meaux, "let this be a lesson to you. In future, be punctual."

"I really must give you a thousand excuses."

"Never expose yourself again to having your neighbour erased."

"I am very sorry."

Laigle burst out laughing.

"And I, in raptures; I was on the brink of being a lawyer. This rupture saves me. I renounce the triumphs of the bar. I shall not defend the widow, and I shall not attack the orphan. No more toga, no more probation.

Here is my erasure obtained. It is to you that I owe it, Monsieur Pontmercy. I intend to pay you a solemn visit of thanks. Where do you live?"

"In this cabriolet," said Marius.

"A sign of opulence," replied Laigle calmly. "I congratulate you. You have here rent of nine thousand francs a year."

Just then Courfeyrac came out of the café.

Marius smiled sadly.

"I have been paying this rent for two hours, and I hope to get out of it; but, it is the usual story, I do not know where to go."

"Monsieur," said Courfeyrac, "come home with me."

"I should have priority," observed Laigle, "but I have no home."

"Silence, Bossuet," replied Courfeyrac.

"Bossuet," said Marius, "but I thought you called yourself Laigle."

"Of Meaux," answered Laigle; "metaphorically, Bossuet."

Courfeyrac got into the cabriolet.

"Driver," said he, "Hotel de la Porte Saint Jacques."

And that same evening, Marius was installed in a room at the Hotel de la Porte Saint Jacques, side by side with Courfeyrac.

III.

In a few days, Marius was the friend of Courfeyrac. Youth is the season of prompt weldings, and rapid cicatrizations. Marius, in Courfeyrac's presence, breathed freely, a new thing for him. Courfeyrac asked him no questions. He did not even think of it. At that age, the countenance tells all at once. Speech is useless.

There are some young men of whom we might say their physiognomies are talkative. They look at one another, they know one another.

One morning, however, Courfeyrac abruptly put this question to him.

"By the way, have you any political opinions?"

"What do you mean?" said Marius, almost offended at the question.

"What are you?"

"Bonapartist democrat."

"Grey shade of quiet mouse colour," said Courfeyrac.

The next day Courfeyrac introduced Marius to the Café Musain. Then he whispered in his ear with a smile, "I must give you your admission into the revolution." And he took him into the room of the Friends of the A B C. He presented him to the other members, saying in an undertone this simple word, which Marius did not understand, "A pupil."

Marius had fallen into a mental wasps' nest. Still, although silent and serious, he was not the less winged, nor the less armed.

Marius, up to this time solitary and inclined to soliloquy and privacy by habit and by taste, was a little bewildered at this flock of young men about him. All these different progressives attacked him at once, and perplexed him. The tumultuous sweep and sway of all these minds at liberty and at work set his ideas in a whirl. Sometimes, in the confusion, they went so far from him that he had some difficulty in finding them again. He heard talk of philosophy, of literature, of art, of history, of religion, in a style he had not looked for. He caught glimpses of strange appearances; and, as he did not bring them into perspective, he was not sure that it was not a chaos that he saw. On abandoning his grandfather's opinions for his father's, he had thought himself settled; he now suspected, with

anxiety, and without daring to confess it to himself, that he was not. The angle under which he saw all things was beginning to change anew. A certain oscillation shook the whole horizon of his brain. A strange internal moving-day. He almost suffered from it.

It seemed that there were to these young men no "sacred things." Marius heard, upon every subject, a singular language, annoying to his still timid mind.

A theatre poster presented itself, decorated with the title of a tragedy of the old repertory, called classic: "Down with tragedy dear to the bourgeois!" cried Bahorel. And Marius heard Combeferre reply,—

"You are wrong, Bahorel. The bourgeoisie love tragedy, and upon that point we must let the bourgeoisie alone. Tragedy in a wig has its reason for being, and I am not one of those who in the name of Æschylus, deny it the right of existence. There are rough drafts in nature; there are, in creation, ready-made parodies; a bill which is not a bill, wings which are not wings, fins which are not fins, claws which are not claws, a mournful cry which inspires us with a desire to laugh—there is the duck. Now, since the fowl exists along with the bird, I do not see why classic tragedy should not exist in the face of antique tragedy."

At another time Marius happened to be passing through the Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau between Enjolras and Courfeyrac.

Courfeyrac took his arm,—

"Give attention. This is the Rue Plâtrière, now called Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau, on account of a singular household which lived on it sixty years ago. It consisted of Jean Jacques and Thérèse. From time to time little creatures were born in it. Thérèse brought them forth; Jean Jacques turned them forth."

And Enjolras replied with severity,—

"Silence before Jean Jacques! I admire that man. He

disowned his children; very well; but he adopted the people."

None of these young men uttered this word—the Emperor. Jean Prouvaire alone sometimes said Napoleon; all the rest said Bonaparte. Enjolras pronounced *Buonaparte*.

Marius became confusedly astonished. *Initium sapientiæ.*

IV.

THAT evening left Marius in a profound agitation, with a sorrowful darkness in his soul. He was experiencing what perhaps the earth experiences at the moment when it is furrowed with the share that the grains of wheat may be sown; it feels the wound alone; the thrill of the germ and the joy of the fruit do not come until later.

Marius was gloomy. He had but just attained a faith; could he so soon reject it? He decided within himself that he could not. He declared to himself that he would not doubt, and he began to doubt in spite of himself. To be between two religions, one which you have not yet abandoned, and another which you have not yet adopted, is insupportable; and twilight is pleasant only to bat-like souls. Marius was an open eye, and he needed the true light. To him the dusk of doubt was harmful. Whatever might be his desire to stop where he was, and to hold fast there, he was irresistibly compelled to continue, to advance, to examine, to think, to go forward. Where was that going to lead him? he feared, after having taken so many steps which had brought him nearer to his father, to take now any steps which should separate them. His dejection increased with every reflection which occurred to him. Steep cliffs rose about him. He was on good terms neither

with his grandfather nor with his friends ; rash towards the former, backward towards the others ; and he felt doubly isolated, from old age, and also from youth. He went no more to the Café Musain.

In this trouble in which his mind was plunged he scarcely gave a thought to certain serious phases of existence. The realities of life do not allow themselves to be forgotten. They came and jogged his memory sharply.

One morning the keeper of the house entered Marius's room, and said to him,—

“ Monsieur Courfeyrac is responsible for you.”

“ Yes.”

“ But I am in need of money.”

“ Ask Courfeyrac to come and speak with me,” said Marius.

Courfeyrac came ; the host left them. Marius related to him what he had not thought of telling him before, that he was, so to speak, alone in the world, without any relatives.”

“ What are you going to become ?” said Courfeyrac.

“ I have no idea,” answered Marius.

“ What are you going to do ?”

“ I have no idea.”

“ Have you any money ?”

“ Fifteen francs.”

“ Do you wish me to lend you some ?”

“ Never.”

“ Have you any clothes ?”

“ What you see.”

“ Have you any jewellery ?”

“ A watch.”

“ A silver one ?”

“ Gold, here it is.”

“ I know a dealer in clothing who will take your overcoat and one pair of trousers.”

“ That is good.”

"You will then have but one pair of trousers, one waistcoat, one hat, and one coat."

"And my boots."

"What? You will not go bare-foot? What opulence!"

"That will be enough."

"I know a watchmaker who will buy your watch."

"That is good."

"No, it is not good. What will you do afterwards?"

"What I must. Anything honourable at least."

"Do you know English?"

"No."

"Do you know German?"

"No."

"That is bad."

"Why?"

"Because a friend of mine, a bookseller, is making a sort of encyclopædia, for which you could have translated German or English articles. It is poor pay, but it gives a living."

"I will learn English and German."

"And in the meantime?"

"In the meantime I will eat my coats and my watch."

The clothes-dealer was sent for. He gave twenty francs for the clothes. They went to the watchmaker. He gave forty-five francs for the watch."

"That is not bad," said Marius to Courfeyrac, on returning to the house; "with my fifteen francs, this makes eighty francs."

"The hotel bill?" observed Courfeyrac.

"Ah! I forgot," said Marius.

The host presented his bill, which must be paid on the spot. It amounted to seventy francs.

"I have ten francs left," said Marius.

"The devil!" said Courfeyrac, "you will have five

francs to eat while you are learning English, and five francs while you are learning German. That will be swallowing a language very rapidly, or a hundred-sous piece very slowly."

Meanwhile Aunt Gillenormand, who was really a kind person on sad occasions, had finally unearthed Marius's lodgings.

One morning, when Marius came home from the school, he found a letter from his aunt, and the *sixty pistoles*—that is to say, six hundred francs in gold—in a sealed-box.

Marius sent the thirty louis back to his aunt, with a respectful letter, in which he told her that he had the means of living, and that he could provide henceforth for all his necessities. At that time he had three francs left.

The aunt did not inform the grandfather of this refusal lest she should exasperate him. Indeed, had he not said, "Let nobody ever speak to me of this blood drinker?"

Marius left the Porte Saint Jacques Hotel, unwilling to contract debt.





Book Third

THE EXCELLENCE OF MISFORTUNE.

I.

LIFE became stern to Marius. To eat his coats and his watch was nothing. He chewed that inexpressible thing which is called *the cud of bitterness*. A horrible thing, which includes days without bread, nights without sleep, evenings without a candle, a hearth without a fire, weeks without labour, a future without hope, a coat out at the elbows, an old hat which makes young girls laugh, the door found shut against you at night because you have not paid your rent, the insolence of the porter and the landlord, the jibes of neighbours, humiliations, self-respect outraged, any drudgery acceptable, disgust, bitterness, prostration—Marius learned how one swallows down all these things, and how they are often the only things that one has to swallow. At that period of existence, when man has need of pride, because he has need of love, he felt that he was mocked at because he was badly dressed, and ridiculed because he was poor. At the age when youth swells the heart with an imperial

pride, he more than once dropped his eyes upon his worn-out boots, and experienced the undeserved shame and the poignant blushes of misery. Wonderful and terrible trial, from which the feeble come out infamous, from which the strong come out sublime. Crucible into which destiny casts a man whenever she desires a scoundrel or a demi-god.

For there are many great deeds done in the small struggles of life. There is a determined though unseen bravery, which defends itself foot to foot in the darkness against the fatal invasions of necessity and of baseness. Noble and mysterious triumphs which no eye sees, which no renown rewards, which no flourish of trumpets salutes. Life, misfortune, isolation, abandonment, poverty, are battle-fields which have their heroes; obscure heroes, sometimes greater than the illustrious heroes.

Strong and rare natures are thus created; misery, almost always a stepmother, is sometimes a mother; privation gives birth to power of soul and mind; distress is the nurse of self-respect; misfortune is a good breast for great souls.

There was a period in Marius's life when he swept his own hall, when he bought a pennyworth of Brie cheese at the market-woman's, when he waited for nightfall to make his way to the baker's and buy a loaf of bread, which he carried furtively to his garret, as if he had stolen it. Sometimes there was seen to glide into the corner meat-market, in the midst of the jeering cooks who elbowed him, an awkward young man, with books under his arm, who had a timid and frightened appearance, and who, as he entered, took off his hat from his forehead, which was dripping with sweat, made a low bow to the astonished butcher, another bow to the butcher's boy, asked for a mutton cutlet, paid six or seven sous for it, wrapped it up in paper, put it under his arm between

two books, and went away. It was Marius. On this cutlet, which he cooked himself, he lived three days.

The first day he ate the meat; the second day he ate the fat; the third day he gnawed the bone. On several occasions, Aunt Gillenormand made overtures, and sent him the sixty pistoles. Marius always sent them back, saying that he had no need of anything.

He was still in mourning for his father, when the revolution which we have described was accomplished in his ideas. Since then, he had never left off black clothes. His clothes left him, however. A day came, at last, when he had no coat. His trousers were going also. What was to be done? Courfeyrac, for whom he also had done some good turns, gave him an old coat. For thirty sous, Marius had it turned by some porter or other, and it was a new coat. But this coat was green. Then Marius did not go out till after nightfall. That made his coat black. Desiring always to be in mourning, he clothed himself with night.

Through all this, he procured admission to the bar. He was reputed to occupy Courfeyrac's room, which was decent, and where a certain number of law books, supported and filled out by some odd volumes of novels, made up the library required by the rules.

When Marius had become a lawyer, he informed his grandfather of it, in a letter which was frigid, but full of submission and respect. M. Gillenormand took the letter with trembling hands, read it, and threw it, torn in pieces, into the basket. Two or three days afterwards, Mademoiselle Gillenormand overheard her father, who was alone in his room, talking aloud. This was always the case when he was much excited. She listened: the old man said, "If you were not a fool, you would know that a man cannot be a baron and a lawyer at the same time."

II.

It is with misery as with everything else. It gradually becomes endurable. It ends by taking form and becoming fixed. You vegetate—that is to say, you develop in some wretched fashion, but sufficient for existence. This is the way in which Marius Pontmercy's life was arranged.

He had got out of the narrowest place; the pass widened a little before him. By dint of hard work, courage, perseverance, and will, he had succeeded in earning by his labour about seven hundred francs a year. He had learned German and English; thanks to Courfeyrac, who introduced him to his friend the publisher. Marius filled, in the literary department of the book-house, the useful *rôle* of *utility*. He made out prospectuses, translated from the journals, annotated republications, compiled biographies, &c.,—net result, year in and year out, seven hundred francs. He lived on this. How? Not badly. We are going to tell.

Marius occupied, at an annual rent of thirty francs, a wretched little room in the Gorbeau tenement, with no fireplace, called a cabinet, in which there was no more furniture than was indispensable. The furniture was his own. He gave three francs a month to the old woman who had charge of the building, for sweeping his room, and bringing him every morning a little warm water, a fresh egg, and a penny loaf of bread. On this loaf and this egg he breakfasted. His breakfast varied from two to four sous, as eggs were cheap or dear. At six o'clock in the evening he went down into the Rue Saint Jacques, to dine at Rousseau's, opposite Basset's, the print-dealer's,

at the corner of the Rue des Mathurins. He ate no soup. He took a sixpenny plate of meat, a threepenny half-plate of vegetables, and a threepenny dessert. For three sous, as much bread as he liked. As for wine, he drank water. On paying at the counter, where Madame Rousseau was seated majestically, still plump and fresh also in those days, he gave a sou to the waiter, and Madame Rousseau gave him a smile. Then he went away. For sixteen sous, he had a smile and a dinner.

This Rousseau restaurant, where so few bottles and so many pitchers were emptied, was rather an appeasant than a restorant. It is not kept now. The master had a fine title; he was called Rousseau the Aquatic.

Thus, breakfast four sous, dinner sixteen sous, his food cost him twenty sous a day, which was three hundred and sixty-five francs a year. Add the thirty francs for his lodging, and the thirty-six francs to the old woman, and a few other trifling expenses, and for four hundred and fifty francs, Marius was fed, lodged, and waited upon. His clothes cost him a hundred francs, his linen fifty francs, his washing fifty francs; the whole did not exceed six hundred and fifty francs. This left him fifty francs. He was rich. He occasionally lent ten francs to a friend; Courfeyrac borrowed sixty francs of him once. As for fire, having no fireplace, Marius "simplified" it.

Marius always had two complete suits, one old "for every day," the other quite new, for special occasions. Both were black. He had but three shirts, one he had on, another in the drawer, the third at the washerwoman's. He renewed them as they wore out. They were usually ragged, so he buttoned his coat to his chin.

For Marius to arrive at this flourishing condition had required years. Hard years, and difficult ones; those to get through, these to climb. Marius had never given up for a single day. He had undergone everything in the

shape of privation ; he had done everything, except get into debt. He gave himself this credit, that he had never owed a sou to anybody. For him a debt was the beginning of slavery. He felt even that a creditor is worse than a master ; for a master owns only your person, a creditor owns your dignity, and can belabour that. Rather than borrow, he did not eat. He had had many days of fasting. Feeling that all extremes meet, and that if we do not take care, abasement of fortune may lead to baseness of soul, he watched jealously over his pride. Such a habit or such a carriage as, in any other condition, would have appeared deferential, seemed humiliating, and he braced himself against it. He risked nothing, not wishing to take a backward step. He had a kind of stern blush upon his face. He was timid even to rudeness.

In all his trials he felt encouraged and sometimes even upborne by a secret force within. The soul helps the body, and at certain moments uplifts it. It is the only bird which sustains its cage.

By the side of his father's name, another name was engraven upon Marius's heart—the name of Thénardier. Marius, in his enthusiastic yet serious nature, surrounded with a sort of halo the man to whom, as he thought, he owed his father's life—that brave sergeant who had saved the colonel in the midst of the balls and bullets of Waterloo. He never separated the memory of this man from the memory of his father, and he associated them in his veneration. It was a sort of worship with two steps, the high altar for the colonel, the low one for Thénardier. The idea of the misfortune into which he knew that Thénardier had fallen and been engulfed, intensified his feeling of gratitude. Marius had learned at Montfermeil of the ruin and bankruptcy of the unlucky innkeeper. Since then, he had made untold efforts to get track of him, and

to endeavour to find him, in that dark abyss of misery in which Thénardier had disappeared. Marius had beaten the whole country; he had been to Chelles, to Bondy, to Gournay, to Nogent, to Lagny. For three years he had been devoted to this, spending in these explorations what little money he could spare. Nobody could give him any news of Thénardier; it was thought he had gone abroad. His creditors had sought for him also, with less love than Marius, but with as much zeal, and had not been able to put their hands on him. Marius blamed and almost hated himself for not succeeding in his researches. This was the only debt which the colonel had left him, and Marius made it a point of honour to pay it. "What," thought he, "when my father lay dying on the field of battle, Thénardier could find him through the smoke and the grape, and bring him off on his shoulders, and yet he owed him nothing; while I, who owe so much to Thénardier, I cannot reach him in that darkness in which he is suffering, and restore him, in my turn, from death to life. Oh! I will find him!" This was the sweetest and most magnificent dream of Marius.

III

MARIUS was now twenty years old. It was three years since he had left his grandfather. They remained on the same terms on both sides, without attempting a reconciliation, and without seeking to meet. And, indeed, what was the use of meeting? to come in conflict? Which would have had the best of it? Marius was a vase of brass, but M. Gillenormand was an iron pot.

To tell the truth, Marius was mistaken as to his grandfather's heart. He imagined that M. Gillenormand had

never loved him, and that this crusty and harsh yet smiling old man, who swore, screamed, stormed, and lifted his cane, felt for him at most only the affection, at once slight and severe, of the old men of comedy. Marius was deceived. There are fathers who do not love their children; there is no grandfather who does not adore his grandson. In reality, we have said, M. Gillenormand worshipped Marius. He worshipped him in his own way, with an accompaniment of cuffs, and even of blows; but, when the child was gone, he felt a dark void in his heart; he ordered that nobody should speak of him again, and regretted that he was so well obeyed. At first he hoped that this Buonapartist, this Jacobin, this terrorist, this Septembrist, would return. But weeks passed away, months passed away, years passed away; to the great despair of M. Gillenormand, the blood-drinker did not reappear! "But I could not do anything else than turn him away," said the grandfather, and he asked himself: "If it were to be done again, would I do it?" His pride promptly answered, "Yes," but his old head, which he shook in silence, sadly answered, "No." He had his hours of dejection. He missed Marius. Old men need affection as they do sunshine. It is warmth. However strong his nature might be, the absence of Marius had changed something in him. For nothing in the world would he have taken a step towards the "little rogue;" but he suffered. He never inquired after him, but he thought of him constantly. He lived, more and more retired, in the Marais. He was still, as formerly, gay and violent, but his gaiety had a convulsive harshness, as if it contained grief and anger, and his bursts of violence always terminated by a sort of placid and gloomy exhaustion. He said sometimes: "Oh! if he would come back, what a good box of the ear I would give him."

As for the aunt, she thought too little to love very much; Marius was now nothing to her but a sort of dim dark out-

line ; and she finally busied herself a good deal less about him than with the cat or the paroquet which she probably had. What increased the secret suffering of grandfather Gillenormand was, that he shut her entirely out, and let her suspect nothing of it. His chagrin was like those newly-invented furnaces which consume their own smoke. Sometimes it happened that some blundering officious body would speak to him of Marius, and ask, "What is your grandson doing, or what has become of him?" The old bourgeois would answer, with a sigh, if he was too sad, or giving his ruffle a tap, if he wished to seem gay, "Mon-sieur the Baron Pontmercy is pettifogging in some hole."

While the old man was regretting, Marius was rejoicing. As with all good hearts, suffering had taken away his bitterness. He thought of M. Gillenormand only with kindness, but he had determined to receive nothing more from the man *who had been cruel to his father*. This was now the softened translation of his first indignation. Moreover, he was happy in having suffered, and in suffering still. It was for his father. His hard life satisfied him, and pleased him. He said to himself, with a sort of pleasure, that—*it was the very least*; that it was—an expiation; that, save for this, he would have been punished otherwise and later, for his unnatural indifference towards his father, and towards such a father; that it would not have been just that his father should have had all the suffering, and himself none;—what were his efforts and his privation, moreover, compared with the heroic life of the colonel?—that, finally, his only way of drawing near his father, and becoming like him, was to be valiant against indigence as he had been brave against the enemy; and that this was doubtless what the colonel meant by the words, "*He will be worthy of it.*" Words which Marius continued to bear, not upon his breast, the colonel's paper having disappeared, but in his heart.

And then, when his grandfather drove him away, he was

but a child ; now he was a man. He felt it. Misery, we must insist, had been good to him. Poverty in youth, when it succeeds, is so far magnificent that it turns the whole will towards effort, and the whole soul towards aspiration. Poverty strips the material life entirely bare, and makes it hideous ; thence arise inexpressible yearnings towards the ideal life. The rich young man has a hundred brilliant and coarse amusements—racing, hunting, dogs, cigars, gaming, feasting, and the rest ; busying the lower portions of the soul at the expense of its higher and delicate portions. The poor young man must work for his bread ; he eats ; when he has eaten, he has nothing more but reverie.

This is what had taken place in Marius. He had even, to tell the truth, gone a little too far on the side of contemplation. The day on which he had arrived at the point of being almost sure of earning his living, he stopped there, preferring to be poor, and retrenching from labour to give to thought. That is to say, he passed sometimes whole days in thinking, plunged and swallowed up like a visionary, in the mute joys of ecstasy and interior radiance. He had put the problem of his life thus : to work as little as possible at material labour, that he might work as much as possible at impalpable labour ; in other words, to give a few hours to real life, and to cast the rest into the infinite. He did not perceive, thinking that he lacked nothing, that contemplation thus obtained comes to be one of the forms of sloth, that he was content with subduing the primary necessities of life, and that he was resting too soon.

It was clear that, for his energetic and generous nature, this could only be a transitory state, and that at the first shock against the inevitable complications of destiny, Marius would arouse.

Meantime, although he was a lawyer, and whatever Grandfather Gillenormand might think, he was not pleading, he was not even pettifogging. Reverie had turned

him away from the law. To consort with attorneys, to attend courts, to hunt up cases, was wearisome. Why should he do it? He saw no reason for changing his business. This cheap and obscure book-making had procured him sure work, work with little labour, which, as we have explained, was sufficient for him.

One of the booksellers for whom he worked, M. Magimel, I think, had offered to take him home, give him a good room, furnish him regular work, and pay him fifteen hundred francs a year. To have a good room! fifteen hundred francs! Very well. But to give up his liberty! to work for a salary, to be a kind of literary clerk! In Marius's opinion, to accept would make his position better and worse at the same time; he would gain in comfort and lose in dignity; it was a complete and beautiful misfortune given up for an ugly and ridiculous constraint; something like a blind man who should gain one eye. He refused.

Marius's life was solitary. From his taste for remaining outside of everything, and also from having been startled by its excesses, he had decided not to enter the group presided over by Enjolras. They had remained good friends; they were ready to help one another, if need were, in all possible ways; but nothing more. Marius had two friends, one young, Courfeyrac, and one old, M. Mabeuf. He inclined towards the old one. First, he was indebted to him for the revolution through which he had gone; he was indebted to him for having known and loved his father. "*He operated upon me for the cataract,*" said he.

Certainly, this churchwarden had been decisive.

M. Mabeuf was not, however, on that occasion anything more than the calm and passive agent of Providence. He had enlightened Marius accidentally and without knowing it, as a candle does which somebody

carries ; he had been the candle and not the somebody.

As to the interior political revolution in Marius, M. Mabeuf was entirely incapable of comprehending it, desiring it, or directing it.

As we shall meet M. Mabeuf hereafter, a few words will not be useless.

IV.

THE day that M. Mabeuf said to Marius, "*Certainly, I approve of political opinions,*" he expressed the real condition of his mind. All political opinions were indifferent to him, and he approved them all without distinction, provided they left him quiet, as the Greeks called the Furies, "the beautiful, the good, the charming," the *Eumenides*. M. Mabeuf's political opinion was a passionate fondness for plants, and a still greater one for books. He had, like everybody else, his termination in *ist*, without which nobody could have lived in those times, but he was neither a Royalist, nor a Bonapartist, nor a Chartist, nor an Orleanist, nor an anarchist ; he was an old-bookist.

He did not understand how men could busy themselves with hating one another about such bubbles as the charter, democracy, legitimacy, the Monarchy, the Republic, &c., when there were in this world all sorts of mosses, herbs, and shrubs, which they could look at, and piles of folios, and even of 32mos, which they could pore over. He took good care not to be useless ; having books did not prevent him from reading, being a botanist did not prevent him from being a gardener. When he knew Pontmercy, there was this sympathy between the Colonel and himself, that

what the colonel did for flowers, he did for fruits. M. Mabeuf had succeeded in producing seedling pears as highly flavoured as the pears of Saint Germain ; to one of his combinations, as it appears, we owe the October Mirabelle, now famous, and not less fragrant than the Summer Mirabelle. He went to mass rather from good feeling than from devotion, and because he loved the faces of men, but hated their noise, and he found them, at church only, gathered together and silent. Feeling that he ought to be something in the Government, he had chosen the career of a churchwarden. Finally, he had never succeeded in loving any woman as much as a tulip bulb, or any man as much as an Elzevir. He had long passed his sixtieth year, when one day somebody asked him, "Were you never married?" "I forget," said he. When he happened sometimes—to whom does it not happen?—to say, "Oh ! if I were rich," it was not upon ogling a pretty girl, like M. Gillenormand, but upon seeing an old book. He lived alone, with an old governess. He was a little gouty, and when he slept, his old fingers, stiffened with rheumatism, were clenched in the folds of the clothes. He had written and published a "Flora of the Environs of Cauteretz," with coloured illustrations, a highly-esteemed work, the plates of which he owned, and which he sold himself. People came two or three times a day and rang his bell, in the Rue Mézières, for it. He received fully two thousand francs a year for it ; this was nearly all his income. Though poor, he had succeeded in gathering together, by means of patience, self-denial, and time, a valuable collection of rare copies on every subject. He never went out without a book under his arm, and he often came back with two. The only decoration of the four ground-floor rooms which, with a small garden, formed his dwelling were some framed herbariums and a few engravings o

old masters. The sight of a sword or a gun chilled him. In his whole life he had never been near a cannon, even at the Invalides. He had a passable stomach, a brother who was a curé, hair entirely white, no teeth left either in his mouth or in his mind, a tremor of the whole body, a Picard accent, a childlike laugh, weak nerves, and the appearance of an old sheep. With all that, no other friend nor any other intimate acquaintance among the living, but an old bookseller of the Porte Saint Jacques, named Royol. His mania was the naturalization of indigo in France.

His servant was, also, a peculiar variety of innocence. The poor, good old woman was a maid. None of her dreams went as far as man. She had never got beyond her cat, Sultan. She had, like him, moustaches. Her glory was in the whiteness of her caps. She spent her time on Sundays, after mass, in reckoning up the linen in her trunk, and in spreading out on her bed dresses which she bought and never had made up. She could read. M. Mabeuf had given her the nickname of "Mother Plutarch."

M. Mabeuf had taken Marius into favour, because Marius, being young and gentle, reanimated his old age without alarming his timidity. Youth and gentleness together have the same effect upon old people as sunshine without wind. When Marius had had enough of military glory, gunpowder, marches and counter-marches, and all those tremendous battles in which his father had given and received such terrible sabre-cuts, he would go and see M. Mabeuf, and M. Mabeuf would speak to him of the hero from a floral point of view.

About the year 1830, his brother, the curé, died, and almost immediately, like the coming-on of night, the whole horizon became overclouded to M. Mabeuf. A bankruptcy snatched from him the sum of ten thousand francs,

which was all he possessed of the goods of himself and his brother. The Revolution of July brought on a crisis in the book-trade. In times of trouble, the first thing which does not sell is a *Flora*. "*The Flora of the Environs of Caunteretz*" stopped short. Weeks passed by without a customer. Sometimes M. Mabeuf trembled at a ring of the bell.

"Monsieur," said Mother Plutarch to him, mournfully, "it is the water-carrier."

In short, one day M. Mabeuf left the Rue Mézières, threw up the office of churchwarden, renounced Saint Sulpice, sold a portion—not of his books, but of his prints, to which he was less attached—and took up his abode in the Boulevard Montparnasse, where, however, he did not stay more than one quarter, for two reasons : first, the ground floor and garden cost three hundred francs, and he did not dare devote more than two hundred francs to his rent ; secondly, being next door to the Fatou shooting gallery, he heard the pistol-shots, which was intolerable to him.

He carried off his *Flora*, his herbariums, his portfolios, and his books, and established himself near the Salpêtrière, in a sort of cottage of the village of Austerlitz, where, for fifty crowns a year, he had three rooms and a garden enclosed by a hedge. He took advantage of this removal to sell nearly all his furniture. The day of his entrance into this new home he was very lively, and himself fixed the nails for hanging up his engravings and herbariums ; he dug in his garden the remainder of the day, and in the evening, seeing that Mother Plutarch wore a dejected and thoughtful look, he slapped her on the shoulder, and said with a smile, "We have indigo !"

Two visitors only, the bookseller of the *Porte Saint Jacques* and Marius, were admitted to see him in his

Austerlitz cottage, a name which, to tell the truth, was sufficiently disagreeable to him.

Moreover, as we have just shown, minds absorbed in a wisdom or a folly—or, as often happens, in both at once—are but very slowly pervious to the affairs of life. Their own fate is far from their thoughts. The result of these concentrations is a passiveness, which, if it were logical, would resemble philosophy. They decline, descend, pass away, even fall to pieces, without scarcely perceiving it. It is true this always ends in an awakening, but it is a tardy one. In the meantime, it seems as though they were neutral in a game being played between their happiness and misery. They are the stake, and look on at the game with indifference.

Thus it was that, through this darkness which gathered round him, all his hopes dying out one after the other, M. Mabeuf remained serene—a little childishly, but very profoundly. His habits of thought had the come-and-go of a pendulum. Once started by an illusion, he went for a long time, even after the illusion had vanished. A clock does not stop short the exact moment one loses the key.

M. Mabeuf had harmless pleasures. These pleasures were inexpensive and unprepared. The slightest chance provided him with them. One day Mother Plutarch was reading a novel in one corner of the room. She was reading aloud, as she found she understood better. To read aloud, is to assert to one's self one's reading. There are some people who read very loud, and who appear to be giving themselves their word of honour as to what they are reading.

Mother Plutarch was reading with just such energy the novel she held in her hand. M. Mabeuf listened without understanding.

While reading, Mother Plutarch came to this sentence. It was about an officer of dragoons and a beautiful woman,—

“La belle bouda, et le dragon.”

Here she stopped to wipe her spectacles.

“‘Bouddha and the Dragon,’” muttered M. Mabeuf. “Yes, it is true, there was a dragon, which, from the depths of its cavern, threw flames from its mouth, which burned the heavens. Several stars had already been set on fire by this monster, who had, besides, the claws of a tiger. Bouddha went into his den and succeeded in converting the dragon. That is a good book you are reading there, Mother Plutarch. A more beautiful legend does not exist.”

And M. Mabeuf fell into a delicious reverie.

V.

MARIUS was fond of the frank old man, who saw himself slowly attacked by poverty, and who was astonished little by little, without, however, being saddened by it. Marius met Courfeyrac, and sought M. Mabeuf. Very seldom, however ; once or twice a month at most.

Marius liked to take long walks alone on the outer boulevards, or in the Champs de Mars, or in the least frequented passages of the Luxembourg. He sometimes passed half a day in looking at the garden of a market-gardener, the squares of salad, the hens on the dunghill, and the horse turning the wheel. The passers-by looked at him with surprise, and some of them saw a suspicious and sinister look in him. It was only a poor young man dreaming without an object.

It was in one of these walks that he had discovered the

Gorbeau hovel ; and its isolation and cheapness tempting him, he took up his residence there. He was only known there under the name of M. Marius.

Some of the old generals or former companions of his father, when they knew it, had invited him to come and see them. Marius never refused. These were opportunities to speak of his father. He went thus, from time to time, to Count Pajol, to General Bellavesne, to General Fririon, at the Invalides. They had music and dancing. On these evenings Marius put on his new coat. But he never went to these *soirées* or balls except on days when it froze hard. For he could not afford to pay for a carriage, and he would not arrive except with boots like mirrors.

He sometimes said, without any bitterness, "Men are so constituted that, in a drawing-room, you may be dirty all over, except as to your boots. To be well received, you only require one thing unexceptionable—conscience?—no, boots."

All the passions, except those of the heart, are cleared away by reverie. Marius's political fevers had vanished before it. The Revolution of 1830, in satisfying and calming him, had helped to do this. He remained the same, almost in his passions. He always held the same opinions. Only that they were softened. Correctly speaking, he no longer had opinions, he had sympathies ! Of what party was he ? On the side of humanity. Of humanity, he preferred France ; of the nation, he preferred the people ; of the people, he preferred women. It was there he especially bestowed his pity. At one time he preferred an idea to a fact, a poet to a hero, and admired far more a book like Job than an event like Marengo. And then, when, after a day of meditation, he came to himself again, on the boulevards and through the branches of the trees perceived a boundless space, nameless gleams, depth,

shadow, mystery—all things merely human seemed to him very small.

He thought he had, and he had, perhaps, in fact, arrived at the truth of life and of human philosophy, and he had finally come hardly to look at anything but the sky, the only thing that Truth can see from the bottom of her well.

This did not hinder him from multiplying plans, combinations, scaffoldings, projects for the future.

Towards the middle of this year, 1831, the old woman who waited upon Marius told him that his neighbours, the wretched Jondrette family, were to be turned into the street. Marius, who passed almost all his days out of doors, hardly knew that he had any neighbours.

“Why are they turned out?” said he.

“Because they do not pay their rent; they owe for two terms.”

“How much is that?”

“Twenty francs,” said the old woman.

Marius had thirty francs in reserve in a drawer.

“Here,” said he, to the old woman, “there are twenty-five francs. Pay for these poor people; give them five francs, and do not tell them that it is from me.”

VI.

It happened that the regiment to which Lieutenant Théodule belonged came to be stationed at Paris. This was the occasion of a second idea occurring to Aunt Gillenormand. She had, the first time, thought she would have Marius watched by Théodule; she plotted to have Théodule supplant Marius.

At all events, and in case the grandfather should feel a vague need of a young face in the house—these rays of dawn are sometimes grateful to ruins—it was expedient to

find another Marius. "Yes," thought she, "it is merely an erratum such as I see in the books ; for Marius read Théodule."

A grandnephew is almost a grandson ; for want of a lawyer a lancer will do.

One morning, as Monsieur Gillenormand was reading something like *La Quotidienne*, his daughter entered, and said in her softest voice, for the matter concerned her favourite.

"Father, Théodule is coming this morning to present his respects to you."

"Who is that—Théodule ?"

"Your grandnephew."

"Ah !" said the grandfather.

Then he resumed his reading, thought no more of the grandnephew who was nothing more than any Théodule, and very soon was greatly excited, as was almost always the case when he read. The "sheet" which he had, Royalist indeed—that was a matter of course—announced for the next day, without any modification, one of the little daily occurrences of the Paris of that time : that the students of the schools of Law and Medicine would meet in the square of the Pantheon at noon, to deliberate. The question was one of the topics of the moment, the artillery of the National Guard, and a conflict between the Minister of War and "the citizen militia" on the subject of the cannon planted in the court of the Louvre. The students were to "deliberate" thereupon. It did not require much more to enrage Monsieur Gillenormand.

He thought of Marius, who was a student, and who, probably, would go, like the others, "to deliberate, at noon, in the square of the Pantheon."

While he was dwelling upon this painful thought, Lieutenant Théodule entered, in citizen's dress, which was adroit, and was discreetly introduced by Mademoiselle

Gillenormand. The lancer reasoned thus : "The old Druid has not put everything into an annuity. It is well worth while to disguise one's self in taffeta occasionally."

Mademoiselle Gillenormand said aloud to her father,—

"Théodule, your grandnephew."

And, in a whisper, to the lieutenant,—

"Say yes to everything."

And she retired.

The lieutenant, little accustomed to such venerable encounters, stammered out with some timidity, "Good morning, uncle," and made a mixed bow, composed of the involuntary and mechanical awkwardness of the military salute finished off with the bow of the bourgeois.

"Ah! it is you; very well, take a seat," said the old man.

And then he entirely forgot the lancer.

Théodule sat down, and Monsieur Gillenormand got up.

Monsieur Gillenormand began to walk up and down with his hands in his pockets, talking aloud, and rubbing with his nervous old fingers the two watches which he carried in his two waistcoat pockets.

"This mob of snivellers! they meet together in the square of the Pantheon. Scapegraces yesterday at nurse! And they deliberate at noon to-morrow! What are we coming to?—what are we coming to? Republicans and galley-slaves, they fit like a nose and a handkerchief. Carnot said, 'Where would you have me go, traitor?' Fouché answered, 'Wherever you like, fool!' That is what Republicans are."

"It is true," said Théodule.

Monsieur Gillenormand turned his head half round, saw Théodule, and continued,—

"Only to think that this scoundrel has been so wicked as to turn Carbonaro! Why did you leave my house? To go out and be a Republican. Pish! in the first place, the

people do not want your Republic—they do not want it; they have good sense—they know very well that there always have been kings, and that there always will be; they know very well that the people, after all, is nothing but the people; they laugh at your Republic—do you understand, idiot?”

“You are right, uncle,” said Théodule.

M. Gillenormand resumed,—

“Cannon in the court of the Museum! what for? Cannon! what do you want? Do you want to shoot down the Apollo Belvidere? All these journals are a pest; all, even the *Drapeau blanc*! At bottom Martainville was a Jacobin. Oh! just heavens! you can be proud of having thrown your grandfather into despair, you can!”

“That is evident,” said Théodule.

And taking advantage of M. Gillenormand’s drawing breath, the lancer added, magisterially, “There ought to be no journal but the *Moniteur*, and no book but the *Annuaire Militaire*.”

M. Gillenormand went on,—

“He is like their Sieyès! a regicide ending off as a senator; that is always the way they end. Citizens, I tell you that your progress is a lunacy; that your humanity is a dream; that your revolution is a crime; that your Republic is a monster; that your young maiden France comes from the brothel; and I maintain it before you all, whoever you are, be you publicists, be you economists, be you legists, be you greater connoisseurs in liberty, equality, and fraternity than the axe of the guillotine! I tell you that, my good men!”

“Ah,” cried the lieutenant, “that is wonderfully true!”

M. Gillenormand broke off a gesture which he had begun, turned, looked the lancer Théodule steadily in the eyes, and said,—

“You are a fool!”



Book Fourth

THE CONJUNCTION OF TWO STARS

I

MARIUS was now a fine-looking young man, of medium height, with heavy jet-black hair, a high intelligent brow, large and passionate nostrils, a frank and calm expression, and an indescribable something beaming from every feature, which was at once lofty, thoughtful, and innocent. His profile, all the lines of which were rounded, but without loss of strength, possessed that Germanic gentleness which has made its way into French physiognomy through Alsace and Lorraine, and that entire absence of angles which rendered the Sicambri so recognizable among the Romans, and which distinguishes the leonine from the aquiline race. His manners were reserved, cold, polished, far from free.

At the time of his most wretched poverty, he noticed that girls turned when he passed, and with a deathly feeling in his heart he fled or hid himself. He thought they looked at him on account of his old clothes, and that they were laughing at him; the truth is, that they looked at him because of his graceful appearance, and that they dreamed over it.

Les Misérables—Marius.

This wordless misunderstanding between him and the pretty girls he met had rendered him hostile to society. He attached himself to none, for the excellent reason that he fled before all. Thus he lived without aim—like a beast, said Courfeyrac.

Courfeyrac said to him also, "Aspire not to be a sage (they used familiar speech; familiarity of speech is characteristic of youthful friendships). My dear boy, a piece of advice. Read not so much in books, and look a little more upon the women. The little rogues are good for thee, O Marius! By continual flight and blushing thou shalt become a brute."

At other times Courfeyrac met him with,—“Good day, Monsieur Abbé.”

When Courfeyrac said anything of this kind to him, for the next week Marius avoided women, old as well as young, more than ever, and especially did he avoid the haunts of Courfeyrac.

There were, however, in all the immensity of creation, two women from whom Marius never fled, and whom he did not at all avoid. Indeed he would have been very much astonished had anybody told him that they were women. One was the old woman with the beard, who swept his room, and who gave Courfeyrac an opportunity to say, “As his servant wears her beard, Marius does not wear his.” The other was a little girl that he saw very often, and that he never looked at.

For more than a year Marius had noticed in a retired walk of the Luxembourg, the walk which borders the parapet of the Pépinière, a man and a girl quite young, nearly always sitting side by side, on the same seat, at the most retired end of the walk, near the Rue de l'Ouest. Whenever that chance which controls the promenades of men whose eye is turned within, led Marius to this walk, and it was almost every day, he found this couple there.

the man might be sixty years old; he seemed sad and serious; his whole person presented the robust but wearied appearance of a soldier retired from active service. Had he worn a decoration, Marius would have said, "it is an old officer." His expression was kind, but it did not invite approach, and he never returned a look. He wore blue coat and pantaloons, and a broad-brimmed hat, which always appeared to be new, a black cravat, and Quaker linen—that is to say, brilliantly white, but of coarse texture. A grisette passing near him one day, said, "There is a very nice widower." His hair was perfectly white.

The first time the young girl that accompanied him sat down on the seat which they seemed to have adopted, she looked like a girl of about thirteen or fourteen, puny to the extent of being almost ugly, awkward, insignificant, yet promising, perhaps, to have rather fine eyes. But they were always looking about with a disagreeable assurance. She wore the dress, at once aged and childish, peculiar to the convent school-girl, an ill-fitting garment of coarse black merino. They appeared to be father and daughter.

For two or three days Marius scrutinized this old man, who was not yet an aged man, and this little girl, not yet a woman; then he paid no more attention to them. For their part, they did not even seem to see him. They talked with each other peacefully and with indifference to all else. The girl chatted incessantly and gaily. The old man spoke little, and at times looked upon her with an unutterable expression of fatherliness.

Marius had acquired a sort of mechanical habit of promenading on this walk. He always found them there.

It was usually thus :—

Marius would generally reach the walk at the end opposite their seat, promenade the whole length of it, passing before them, then return to the end by which he entered, and so on. He performed this turn five or six

times in his promenade, and this promenade five or six times a week, but they and he had never come to exchange bows. This man and this young girl, though they appeared, and perhaps because they appeared, to avoid observation, had naturally excited the attention of the five or six students who, from time to time, took their promenades along the Pépinière; the studious after their lecture, the others after their game of billiards. Courfeyrac, who belonged to the latter, had noticed them at some time or other, but finding the girl homely, had very quickly and carefully avoided them. He had fled like a Parthian, launching a nickname behind him. Struck especially by the dress of the little girl and the hair of the old man, he had named the daughter *Mademoiselle Lanoire* [*Black*] and the father *Monsieur Deblanc* [*White*]; and so, as nobody knew them otherwise, in the absence of a name, the surname had become fixed. The students said, "Ah! Monsieur Leblanc is at his seat!" and Marius, like the rest, had found it convenient to call this unknown gentleman M. Leblanc.

We shall do as they did, and say M. Leblanc, for the convenience of this story.

Marius saw them thus nearly every day at the same hour during the first year. He found the man very much to his liking, but the girl rather disagreeable.

II.

THE second year, at the precise point of this history to which the reader has arrived, it so happened that Marius broke off this habit of going to the Luxembourg, without really knowing why himself, and there were nearly six months during which he did not set foot in his walk. At last he went back there again one day; it was a serene

summer morning, Marius was as happy as one always is when the weather is fine. It seemed to him as if he had in his heart all the bird songs which he heard, and all the bits of blue sky which he saw through the trees.

He went straight to "his walk," and as soon as he reached it he saw, still on the same seat, this well-known pair. When he came near them, however, he saw that it was indeed the same man, but it seemed to him that it was no longer the same girl. The woman whom he now saw was a noble, beautiful creature, with all the most bewitching outlines of woman, at the precise moment at which they are yet combined with all the most charming graces of childhood, that pure and fleeting moment which can only be translated by these two words—sweet fifteen. Beautiful chestnut hair, shaded with veins of gold, a brow which seemed chiselled marble, cheeks which seemed made of roses, a pale incarnadine, a flushed whiteness, an exquisite mouth, whence came a smile like a gleam of sunshine, and a voice like music, a head which Raphael would have given to Mary, on a neck which Jean Goujon would have given to Venus. And that nothing might be wanting to this ravishing form, the nose was not beautiful, it was pretty; neither straight nor curved, neither Italian nor Greek; it was the Parisian nose; that is, something sprightly, fine, irregular, and pure—the despair of painters and the charm of poets.

When Marius passed near her he could not see her eyes, which were always cast down. He saw only her long chestnut lashes, eloquent of mystery and modesty.

But that did not prevent the beautiful girl from smiling as she listened to the white-haired man who was speaking to her, and nothing was so transporting as this maidenly smile with these downcast eyes.

At the first instant Marius thought it was another daughter of the same man, a sister doubtless of her whom he had

seen before. But when the invariable habit of his promenade led him for the second time near the seat, and he had looked at her attentively, he recognized that she was the same. In six months the little girl had become a young woman—that was all. Nothing is more frequent than this phenomenon. There is a moment when girls bloom out in a twinkling, and become roses all at once. Yesterday we left them children, to-day we find them dangerous.

She had not only grown, she had become idealized. As three April days are enough for certain trees to put on a covering of flowers, so six months had been enough for her to put on a mantle of beauty.

We sometimes see people, poor and mean, who seem to awaken, pass suddenly from indigence to luxury, incur expenses of all sorts, and become all at once splendid, prodigal, and magnificent. That comes from interest received; yesterday was pay-day. The young girl had received her dividend.

And then she was no longer the school-girl, with her plush hat, her merino dress, her shapeless shoes, and her red hands; taste had come to her with beauty. She was a woman well dressed, with a sort of simple and rich elegance without any particular style. She wore a dress of black damask, a mantle of the same, and a white crape hat. Her white gloves showed the delicacy of her hand, which played with the Chinese ivory handle of her parasol, and her silk boot betrayed the smallness of her foot. When you passed near her, her whole toilet exhaled the penetrating fragrance of youth.

As to the man, he was still the same.

The second time that Marius came near her, the young girl raised her eyes; they were of a deep celestial blue, but in this veiled azure was nothing yet beyond the look of a

child. She looked at Marius with indifference, as she would have looked at any little monkey playing under the sycamores, or the marble vase which casts its shadow over the bench; and Marius also continued his promenade, thinking of something else.

He passed four or five times more by the seat where the young girl was, without even turning his eyes towards her.

On the following days he came as usual to the Luxembourg, as usual he found "the father and daughter" there, but he paid no attention to them. He thought no more of this girl now that she was handsome than he had thought of her when she was homely. He passed very near the bench on which she sat, because that was his habit.

III.

ONE day the air was mild, the Luxembourg was flooded with sunshine and shadow, the sky was as clear as if the angels had washed it in the morning, the sparrows were twittering in the depths of the chestnut trees, Marius had opened his whole soul to nature, he was thinking of nothing, he was living and breathing, he passed near this seat, the young girl raised her eyes, their glances met.

But what was there now in the glance of the young girl? Marius could not have told. There was nothing, and there was everything. It was a strange flash.

She cast down her eyes, and he continued on his way.

What he had seen was not the simple, artless eye of a child; it was a mysterious abyss, half-opened, then suddenly closed.

There is a time when every young girl looks to us. Woe to him upon whom she looks!

This first glance of a soul which does not yet know itself is like the dawn in the sky. It is the awakening of something radiant and unknown. Nothing can express the dangerous chasm of this unlooked-for gleam which suddenly suffuses adorable mysteries, and which is made up of all the innocence of the present, and of all the passion of the future. It is a kind of irresolute lovingness which is revealed by chance, and which is waiting. It is a snare which Innocence unconsciously spreads, and in which she catches hearts without intending it, and without knowing it. It is a maiden glancing like a woman.

It is rare that deep reverie is not born of this glance wherever it may fall. All that is pure, and all that is vestal, is concentrated in this celestial and mortal glance, which, more than the most studied ogling of the coquette, has the magic power of suddenly forcing into bloom in the depths of a heart this flower of the shade, full of perfumes and poisons, which is called love.

At night, on retiring to his garret, Marius cast a look upon his dress, and for the first time perceived that he had the slovenliness, the indecency, and the unheard-of stupidity to promenade in the Luxembourg with his "every-day" suit—a hat broken near the band, coarse teamsters' boots, black pantaloons, shiny at the knees, and a black coat threadbare at the elbows.

IV.

THE next day, at the usual hour, Marius took from his closet his new coat, his new pantaloons, his new hat, and his new boots; he dressed himself in this panoply complete, put on his gloves—prodigious prodigality!—and went to the Luxembourg.

On the way he met Courfeyrac, and pretended not to see him. Courfeyrac, on his return home, said to his friends,—

“I have just met Marius’s new hat and coat, with Marius inside. Probably he was going to an examination. He looked stupid enough.”

On reaching the Luxembourg, Marius took a turn round the fountain, and looked at the swans; then he remained for a long time in contemplation before a statue, the head of which was black with moss, and which was minus a hip. Near the fountain was a big-bellied bourgeois of forty, holding a little boy of five by the hand, to whom he was saying, “Beware of extremes, my son. Keep thyself equally distant from despotism and from anarchy.” Marius listened to this good bourgeois. Then he took another turn round the fountain. Finally, he went towards “his walk;” slowly, and as if with regret. One would have said that he was at once compelled to go and prevented from going. He was unconscious of all this, and thought he was doing as he did every day.

When he entered the walk he saw M. Leblanc and the young girl at the other end “on their seat.” He buttoned his coat, stretched it down that there might be no wrinkles, noticed with some complaisance the lustre of his pantaloons, and marched upon the seat. There was something of attack in this march, and certainly a desire of conquest. I say, then, he marched upon the seat, as I would say—Hannibal marched upon Rome.

Beyond this, there was nothing which was not mechanical in all his movements, and he had in no wise interrupted the customary preoccupations of his mind and his labour. He was thinking at that moment that the “Student’s Manual” was a stupid book, and that it must have been compiled by

rare old fools, to give an analysis, as of masterpieces of the human mind, of three tragedies of Racine and only one of Molière's comedies. He had a sharp singing sound in his ear. While approaching the seat he was smoothing the wrinkles out of his coat, and his eyes were fixed on the young girl. It seemed to him as though she filled the whole extremity of the walk with a pale, bluish light.

As he drew nearer, his step became slower and slower. At some distance from the seat, long before he had reached the end of the walk, he stopped, and he did not himself know how it happened, but he turned back. He did not even say to himself that he would not go to the end. It was doubtful if the young girl could see him so far off, and notice his fine appearance in his new suit. However, he held himself very straight, so that he might look well, in case anybody who was behind should happen to notice him.

He reached the opposite end and then returned, and this time he approached a little nearer to the seat. He even came to within about three trees of it, but there he felt an indescribable lack of power to go further, and he hesitated. He thought he had seen the young girl's face bent towards him. Still he made a great and manly effort, conquered his hesitation, and continued his advance. In a few seconds he was passing before the seat, erect and firm, blushing to his ears, without daring to cast a look to the right or the left, and with his hand in his coat like a statesman. At the moment he passed under the guns of the fortress he felt a frightful palpitation of the heart. She wore, as on the previous day, her damask dress and her crape hat. He heard the sound of an ineffable voice, which might be "her voice." She was talking quietly. She was very pretty. He felt it, though he made no effort to see her. "She could not, however," thought he, "but have some

esteem and consideration for me, if she knew that I was the real author of the dissertation on Marcos Obregon de la Ronda, which Monsieur François de Neufchâteau has put, as his own, at the beginning of his edition of 'Gil Blas!'"

He passed the seat, went to the end of the walk, which was quite near, then turned and passed again before the beautiful girl. This time he was very pale. Indeed, he was experiencing nothing that was not very disagreeable. He walked away from the seat and from the young girl, and although his back was turned, he imagined that she was looking at him, and that made him stumble.

He made no effort to approach the seat again; he stopped midway on the walk, and sat down there—a thing which he never did—casting many side glances, and thinking, in the most indistinct depths of his mind, that after all it must be difficult for persons whose white hat and black dress he admired, to be absolutely insensible to his glossy pantaloons and his new coat.

At the end of a quarter of an hour he rose, as if to recommence his walk towards this seat, which was encircled by a halo. He, however, stood silent and motionless. For the first time in fifteen months he said to himself, that this gentleman, who sat *there* every day with his daughter, had undoubtedly noticed him, and probably thought his assiduity very strange.

For the first time, also, he felt a certain irreverence in designating this unknown man, even in the silence of his thought, by the nickname of M. Leblanc.

He remained thus for some minutes, with his head down, tracing designs on the ground with a little stick which he had in his hand.

Then he turned abruptly away from the seat, away from Monsieur Leblanc and his daughter, and went home.

That day he forgot to go to dinner. At eight o'clock in the evening he discovered it, and as it was too late to go down to the Rue Saint Jacques, "No matter," said he, and he ate a piece of bread.

He did not retire until he had carefully brushed and folded his coat.

V.

NEXT day Ma'am Bougon—thus Courfeyrac designated the old portress-landlady of the Gorbeau tenement—Ma'am Bougon—her name was in reality Madame Bougon, as we have stated, but this terrible fellow Courfeyrac respected nothing—Ma'am Bougon was stupefied with astonishment to see Monsieur Marius go out again with his new coat.

He went again to the Luxembourg, but did not get beyond his seat midway of the walk. He sat down there as on the day previous, gazing from a distance and seeing distinctly the white hat, the black dress, and especially the bluish light. He did not stir from the seat, and did not go home until the gates of the Luxembourg were shut. He did not see Monsieur Leblanc and his daughter retire. He concluded from that that they left the garden by the gate on the Rue de l'Ouest. Later, some weeks afterwards, when he thought of it, he could not remember where he had dined that night.

The next day, for the third time, Ma'am Bougon was thunderstruck. Marius went out with his new suit. "Three days running!" she exclaimed.

She made an attempt to follow him, but Marius walked briskly, and with immense strides; it was a hippopotamus undertaking to catch a chamois. In two minutes she lost

sight of him, and came back out of breath, three-quarters choked by her asthma, and furious. "The silly fellow," she muttered, "to put on his handsome clothes every day, and make people run like that!"

Marius had gone to the Luxembourg.

The young girl was there with Monsieur Leblanc. Marius approached as near as he could, seeming to be reading a book, but he was still very far off; then he returned and sat down on his seat, where he spent four hours watching the artless little sparrows as they hopped along the walk; they seemed to him to be mocking him.

Thus a fortnight rolled away. Marius went to the Luxembourg, no longer to promenade, but to sit down, always in the same place, and without knowing why. Once there he did not stir. Every morning he put on his new suit, not to be conspicuous, and he began again the next morning.

She was indeed of a marvellous beauty. The only remark which would be made, that could resemble a criticism, is, that the contradiction between her look, which was sad, and her smile, which was joyous, gave to her countenance something a little wild, which produced this effect, that at certain moments this sweet face became strange without ceasing to be charming.

VI.

ON one of the last days of the second week, Marius was as usual sitting on his seat, holding in his hand an open book, of which he had not turned a leaf for two hours. Suddenly he trembled. A great event was commencing at the end of the walk. Monsieur Leblanc and his daughter had left their seat, the daughter had taken the

arm of the father, and they were coming slowly towards the middle of the walk where Marius was. Marius closed his book, then he opened it, then he made an attempt to read. He trembled. The halo was coming straight towards him. "Oh dear!" thought he, "I shall not have time to take an attitude." However, the man with the white hair and the young girl were advancing. It seemed to him that it would last a century, and that it was only a second. "What are they coming by here for?" he asked himself. "What! is she going to pass this place? Are her feet to press this ground in this walk, but a step from me?" He was overwhelmed. He would gladly have been very handsome; he would gladly have worn the cross of the Legion of Honour. He heard the gentle and measured sound of their steps approaching. He imagined that Monsieur Leblanc was hurling angry looks upon him. "Is he going to speak to me?" thought he. He bowed his head; when he raised it they were quite near him. The young girl passed, and in passing she looked at him. She looked at him steadily, with a sweet and thoughtful look which made Marius tremble from head to foot. It seemed to him that she reproached him for having been so long without coming to her, and that she said, "It is I who come." Marius was bewildered by these eyes full of flashing light and fathomless abysses.

He felt as though his brain were on fire. She had come to him—what happiness! And then, how she had looked at him! She seemed more beautiful than she had ever seemed before. Beautiful with a beauty which combined all of the woman with all of the angel,—a beauty which would have made Petrarch sing and Dante kneel. He felt as though he was swimming in the deep blue sky. At the same time he was horribly disconcerted, because he had a little dust on his boots.

He felt sure that she had seen his boots in this condition.

He followed her with his eyes till she disappeared, then he began to walk in the Luxembourg like a madman. It is probable that at times he laughed, alone as he was, and spoke aloud. He was so strange and dreamy when near the child's nurses that every one thought he was in love with her.

He went out of the Luxembourg to find her again in some street.

He met Courfeyrac under the arches of the Odéon, and said, "Come and dine with me." They went to Rousseau's and spent six francs. Marius ate like an ogre. He gave six sous to the waiter. At dessert he said to Courfeyrac "Have you read the paper? What a fine speech, Audry de Puyraveau has made!"

He was desperately in love.

After dinner he said to Courfeyrac, "Come to the theatre with me." They went to the Porte Saint Martin to see Frederick in *L'Auberge des Adrets*. Marius was hugely amused.

At the same time he became still more strange and incomprehensible. On leaving the theatre, he refused to look at the garter of a little milliner who was crossing a gutter, and when Courfeyrac said, "*I would not object to putting that woman in my collection,*" it almost horrified him.

Courfeyrac invited him to breakfast next morning at the Café Voltaire. Marius went and ate still more than the day before. He was very thoughtful, and yet very gay. One would have said that he seized upon all possible occasions to burst out laughing. To every country fellow who was introduced to him he gave a tender embrace. A circle of students gathered round the table, and there was talk of the flummery paid for by the government, which was retailed at the Sorbonne; then the conversation fell upon the faults and gaps in the dictionaries and prosodies of

Quicherat. Marius interrupted the discussion by exclaiming, "However, it is a very pleasant thing to have the Cross."

"He is a comical fellow!" said Courfeyrac, aside to Jean Prouvaire.

"No," replied Jean Prouvaire, "he is serious."

He was serious, indeed. Marius was in this first vehement and fascinating period in which the grand passion commences.

One glance had done all that.

When the mine is loaded, and the match is ready, nothing is simpler. A glance is a spark.

It was all over with him. Marius loved a woman. His destiny was entering upon the unknown.

VII.

ISOLATION, separating from all things, pride, independence, a taste for nature, lack of every-day material activity, life in one's self, the secret struggles of chastity, and an ecstasy of good-will towards the whole creation, had prepared Marius for this possession which is called love. His worship for his father had become almost a religion, and, like all religion, had retired into the depths of his heart. He needed something above that. Love came.

A whole month passed during which Marius went every day to the Luxembourg. When the hour came, nothing could keep him away. "He is out at service," said Courfeyrac. Marius lived in transports. It is certain that the young girl looked at him.

He finally grew bolder, and approached nearer to the seat. However, he passed before it no more, obeying at once the instinct of timidity and the instinct of prudence.

peculiar to lovers. He thought it better not to attract the "attention of the father." He formed his combinations of stations behind trees and the pedestals of statues, with consummate art, so as to be seen as much as possible by the young girl and as little as possible by the old gentleman. Sometimes he would stand for half an hour motionless behind some Leonidas or Spartacus with a book in his hand, over which his eyes, timidly raised, were looking for the young girl, while she, for her part, was turning her charming profile towards him, suffused with a smile. While yet talking in the most natural and quiet way in the world with the white-haired man, she rested upon Marius all the dreams of a maidenly and passionate eye. Ancient and immemorial art which Eve knew from the first day of the world, and which every woman knows from the first day of her life! Her tongue replied to one and her eyes to the other.

We must, however, suppose that M. Leblanc perceived something of this at last, for often, when Marius came, he would rise and begin to promenade. He had left their accustomed place, and had taken the seat at the other end of the walk, near the Gladiator, as if to see whether Marius would follow them. Marius did not understand it, and committed that blunder. "The father" began to be less punctual, and did not bring "his daughter" every day. Sometimes he came alone. Then Marius did not stay. Another blunder.

Marius took no note of these symptoms. From the phase of timidity he had passed, a natural and inevitable progress, to the phase of blindness. His love grew. He dreamed of her every night. And then there came to him a good fortune for which he had not even hoped, oil upon the fire, double darkness upon his eyes. One night, at dusk, he found on the seat, which "M. Leblanc and his daughter" had just left, a handkerchief, a plain handkerchief without embroidery, but white, fine, and which appeared to

him to exhale ineffable odours. He seized it in transport. This handkerchief was marked with the letters U. F. Marius knew nothing of this beautiful girl, neither her family, nor her name, nor her dwelling; these two letters were the first thing he had caught of her, adorable initials upon which he began straightway to build his castle. It was evidently her first name. "Ursula," thought he, "what a sweet name!" He kissed the handkerchief, inhaled its perfume, put it over his heart, on his flesh in the day time, and at night went to sleep with it on his lips.

"I feel her whole soul in it!" he exclaimed.

This handkerchief belonged to the old gentleman, who had simply let it fall from his pocket.

For days and days after this piece of good fortune he always appeared at the Luxembourg kissing this handkerchief, and placing it on his heart. The beautiful child did not understand this at all, and indicated it to him by signs, which he did not perceive.

"O modesty!" said Marius.

VIII.

SINCE we have pronounced the word *modesty*, and since we conceal nothing, we must say that once, however, through all his ecstasy, "his Ursula" gave him a very serious pang. It was upon one of the days when she prevailed upon M. Leblanc to leave the seat and to promenade on the walk. A brisk north wind was blowing, which swayed the tops of the plane-trees. Father and daughter, arm in arm, had just passed before Marius's seat. Marius had risen behind them, and was following them with his eyes, as it was natural that he should in this desperate situation of his heart.

Suddenly a gust of wind, rather more lively than the rest,

and probably intrusted with the little affairs of Spring, flew down from La Pepinière, rushed upon the walk, enveloped the young girl in a transporting tremor worthy of the nymphs of Virgil and the fauns of Theocritus, and raised her skirt—this skirt more sacred than that of Isis—almost to the height of the garter. A limb of exquisite mould was seen. Marius saw it. He was exasperated and furious.

The young girl had put down her dress with a divinely startled movement, but he was outraged none the less. True, he was alone in the walk. But there might have been somebody there. And if anybody had been there! Could one conceive of such a thing? What she had done was horrible! Alas! the poor child had done nothing; there was but one culprit, the wind; and yet Marius, in whom all the Bartholo which there is in Cherubin was confusedly trembling, was determined to be dissatisfied, and was jealous of his shadow. For it is thus that is awakened in the human heart and imposed upon man, even unjustly, the bitter and strange jealousy of the flesh. Besides, and throwing **this** jealousy out of consideration, there was nothing **that** was agreeable to him in the sight of that beautiful limb; the white stocking of the first woman that came along would have given him more pleasure.

When "his Ursula," reaching the end of the walk, returned with M. Leblanc, and passed before the seat on which Marius had again sat down, Marius threw at her a cross and cruel look. The young girl slightly straightened back, with that elevation of the eyelids which says, "Well, what is the matter with him?"

That was "their first quarrel."

Marius had hardly finished this scene with her when somebody came down the walk. It was an Invalide, very much bent, wrinkled and pale with age, in the uniform of Louis XV., with the little oval patch of red cloth with

crossed swords on his back, the soldier's Cross of Saint Louis, and decorated also by a coat sleeve in which there was no arm, a silver chin, and a wooden leg. Marius thought he could discern that this man appeared to be very much pleased. It seemed to him even that the old cynic, as he hobbled along by him, had addressed to him a very fraternal and very merry wink, as if by some chance they had been put into communication, and had enjoyed some dainty bit of good fortune together. What had he seen to be so pleased, this relic of Mars? What had happened between this leg of wood and the other? Marius had a paroxysm of jealousy. "Perhaps he was by!" said he; "perhaps he saw!" and he would have been glad to exterminate the Invalide.

Time lending his aid, every point is blunted. This anger of Marius against "Ursula," however just and proper it might be, passed away. He forgave her at last; but it was a great effort; he pouted at her three days.

Meanwhile, in spite of all that, and because of all that, his passion was growing, and was growing mad.

IX.

WE have seen how Marius discovered, or thought he discovered, that her name was Ursula.

P'inger comes with love. To know that her name was Ursula had been much; it was little. In three or four weeks Marius had devoured this piece of good fortune. He desired another. He wished to know where she lived.

He had committed one blunder in falling into the snare of the seat by the Gladiator. He had committed a second by not remaining at the Luxembourg when Monsieur

Leblanc came there alone. He committed a third—a monstrous one. He followed “Ursula.”

She lived in the Rue de l’Ouest, in the least frequented part of it, in a new three-story house, of modest appearance.

From that moment Marius added to his happiness in seeing her at the Luxembourg, the happiness of following her home.

His hunger increased. He knew her name, her first name, at least, the charming name, the real name of a woman; he knew where she lived; he desired to know who she was.

One night after he had followed them home, and seen them disappear at the porte-cochère, he entered after them, and said boldly to the porter,—

“Is it the gentleman on the first floor who has just come in?”

“No,” answered the porter; “it is the gentleman on the third.”

Another fact. This success made Marius still bolder.

“In front?” he asked.

“Faith!” said the porter, “the house is only built on the street.”

“And what is this gentleman?”

“He lives on his income, Monsieur. A very kind man, who does a great deal of good among the poor, though not rich.”

“What is his name?” continued Marius.

The porter raised his head, and said,—

“Is Monsieur a detective?”

Marius retired, much abashed, but still in great transports. He was getting on.

“Good,” thought he. “I know that her name is Ursula, that she is the daughter of a retired gentleman, and that she lives there, in the third story, in the Rue de l’Ouest.”

Next day Monsieur Leblanc and his daughter made but

a short visit to the Luxembourg ; they went away while it was yet broad daylight. Marius followed them into the Rue de l'Ouest, as was his custom. On reaching the porte-cochère, Monsieur Leblanc passed his daughter in, and then stopped, and before entering himself, turned and looked steadily at Marius. The day after that they did not come to the Luxembourg. Marius waited in vain all day.

At nightfall he went to the Rue de l'Ouest, and saw a light in the windows of the third story. He walked beneath these windows until the light was put out.

The next day nobody at the Luxembourg. Marius waited all day, and then went to perform his night duty under the windows. That took him till ten o'clock in the evening. His dinner took care of itself. Fever supports the sick man, and love the lover.

He passed a week in this way. Monsieur Leblanc and his daughter appeared at the Luxembourg no more. Marius made melancholy conjectures ; he dared not watch the porte-cochère during the day. He limited himself to going at night to gaze upon the reddish light of the windows. At times he saw shadows moving, and his heart beat high.

On the eighth day, when he reached the house, there was no light in the windows. "What !" said he, "the lamp is not yet lighted. But yet it is dark. Or they have gone out ?" He waited till ten o'clock. Till midnight. Till one o'clock in the morning. No light appeared in the third-story windows, and nobody entered the house. He went away very gloomy.

On the morrow—for he lived only from morrow to morrow ; there was no longer any to-day, so to speak, to him—on the morrow he found nobody at the Luxembourg. He waited ; at dusk he went to the house. No light in the windows ; the blinds were closed ; the third story was entire-ly dark.

Marius knocked at the porte-cochère, went in, and said to the porter,—

“The gentleman of the third floor?”

“Moved,” answered the porter.

Marius tottered, and said feebly, —

“Since when?”

“Yesterday.”

“Where does he live now?”

“I don’t know anything about it.”

“He has not left his new address, then?”

“No.”

And the porter, looking up, recognized Marius.

“What ! it is you !” said he, but decidedly now ; “you do keep a bright look-out.”





Book Fifth

PATRON-MINETTE

I.

A QUARTETTE of bandits, Claquesous, Gueulemer, Babet, and Montparnasse, ruled from 1830 to 1835 over the lowest depths of the Parisian population of Paris.

Gueulemer was a Hercules without a pedestal. His cave was the Arche-Marion sewer. He was six feet high, and had a marble chest, brazen biceps, cavernous lungs, a colossus's body, and a bird's skull.

Babet was thin and shrewd. He was transparent, but impenetrable. You could see the light through his bones, but nothing through his eye. He professed to be a chemist. He had been bar-keeper for Bobèche, and clown for Bobino. He had played vaudeville at Saint Mihiel. He was an affected man, a great talker, who italicized his smiles, and quoted his gestures.

What was Claquesous? He was night itself. Was his name Claquesous? No. He said, "My name is Nothing-at-all." If a candle was brought he put on a mask. He was a ventriloquist. Babet said, "*Claquesous is a nig'*"

bird with two voices." Claquesous was restless, roving, terrible. It was not certain that he had a name, Claquesous being a nickname; it was not certain that he had a voice, his chest speaking oftener than his mouth; it was not certain that he had a face, nobody having ever seen anything but **his mask**. He disappeared as if he sank into the ground; he came like an apparition.

A mournful sight was Montparnasse. Montparnasse was a child; less than twenty, with a pretty face, lips like cherries, charming black locks, the glow of spring in his eyes; he had all the vices, and aspired to all the crimes. The digestion of what was bad gave him an appetite for what was worse. He was the *gamin* turned vagabond, and the vagabond become an assassin. He was genteel, effeminate, graceful, robust, weak, and ferocious. He wore his hat turned up on the left side, to make room for the tuft of hair, according to the fashion of 1829. He lived by robbery. His coat was of the most fashionable cut, but threadbare. Montparnasse was a fashion-plate living in distress, and committing murders. Few prowlers were so much feared as Montparnasse. At eighteen he had already left several corpses on his track. More than one traveller lay in the shadow of this wretch, with extended arms, and his face in a pool of blood. Frizzled, pomaded, with slender waist, hips like a woman, the bust of a Prussian officer, a buzz of admiration about him from the girls of the boulevard, an elaborately-tied cravat, a slung-shot in his pocket, a flower in his button-hole; such was this charmer of the sepulchre.

II.

THESE four bandits formed a sort of Proteus, winding through the police and endeavouring to escape from the

indiscreet glances of Vidocq "under various form, tree, flame, and fountain," lending each other their names and their tricks, concealing themselves in their own shadow, each a refuge and a hiding-place for the others, throwing off their personalities, as one takes off a false nose at a masked ball, sometimes simplifying themselves till they are but one, sometimes multiplying themselves till Coco Lacour himself took them for a multitude.

These four men were not four men; it was a sort of mysterious robber with four heads preying upon Paris by wholesale; it was the monstrous polyp of evil which inhabits the crypt of society.

By means of their ramifications and the underlying network of their relations, Babet, Gueulemer, Claquesous, and Montparnasse, controlled the general lying-in-wait business of the Department of the Seine. Originators of ideas in this line, men of midnight imagination came to them for the execution. The four villains being furnished with the single draft, they took charge of putting it on the stage. They worked upon scenario. They were always in condition to furnish a company proportioned and suitable to any enterprise which stood in need of aid, and was sufficiently lucrative. A crime being in search of arms, they sublet accomplices to it. They had a company of actors of darkness at the disposition of every cavernous tragedy.

They usually met at nightfall, their waking hour, in the waste grounds near La Salpêtrière. There they conferred. They had the twelve dark hours before them; they allotted their employ.

Patron-Minette, such was the name which was given in subterranean society to the association of these four men. *Patron-Minette* means morning, just as *entre chien et loup* (between dog and wolf)—means night. This appellation, *Patron-Minette*, probably came from the hour at which their work ended, the dawn being the moment for the disappear-

ance of phantoms and the separation of bandits. These four were known by this title. When the Chief Judge of the Assizes visited Lacenaire in prison, he questioned him in relation to some crime which Lacenaire denied. "Who did do it?" asked the Judge. Lacenaire made this reply, enigmatical to the magistrate, but clear to the police: "Patron-Minette, perhaps."





Book Sixth

THE NOXIOUS POOR

I

SUMMER passed, then autumn ; winter came. Neither M. Leblanc nor the young girl had set foot in the Luxembourg. Marius had now but one thought, to see that sweet, that adorable face again. He searched continually ; he searched everywhere ; he found nothing. He was no longer Marius the enthusiastic dreamer, the resolute man, ardent yet firm, the bold challenger of destiny, the brain which projected and built future upon future, the young heart full of plans, projects, prides, ideas, and desires ; he was a lost dog. He fell into a melancholy. It was all over with him. Work disgusted him, walking fatigued him, solitude wearied him, vast nature, once so full of forms, of illuminations, of voices, of counsels, of perspectives, of horizons, of teachings, was now a void before him. It seemed to him that everything had disappeared.

He was still full of thought, for he could not be otherwise ; but he no longer found pleasure in his thoughts. To a

which they were silently but incessantly proposing to him, he answered in the gloom, "What is the use?"

He reproached himself a hundred times. "Why did I follow her? I was so happy in seeing her only! She looked at me; was not that infinite? She had the appearance of loving me; was not that everything? I desired to have what? There is nothing more after that. I was a fool. It is my fault," etc., etc. Courfeyrac, to whom he confided nothing—that was his nature, but who found out a little of everything—that was his nature also, had begun by felicitating him upon being in love, and wondering at it withal; then seeing Marius fallen into this melancholy, he had at last said to him, "I see that you have been nothing but an animal. Here, come to the Cabin."

Once, confiding in a beautiful September sun, Marius allowed himself to be taken to the Bal de Sceaux by Courfeyrac, Bossuet, and Grantaire, hoping—what a dream—that he might possibly find her there. We need not say that he did not see her whom he sought. "But yet it is here that all the lost women are to be found," muttered Grantaire aside. Marius left his friends at the ball, and went back on foot, alone, tired, feverish, with sad and troubled eyes, in the night, overcome by the noise and dust of the joyous coaches full of singing parties who passed by him returning from the festival, while he, discouraged, was breathing in the pungent odour of the walnut-trees by the wayside, to restore his brain.

He lived more and more alone, bewildered, overwhelmed, given up to his inward anguish, walking to and fro in his grief like a wolf in a cage, seeking everywhere for the absent, stupefied with love.

At another time, an accidental meeting produced a singular effect upon him. In one of the little streets in the neighbourhood of the Boulevard des Invalides, he saw a man dressed like a labourer, wearing a cap with a long visor,

from beneath which escaped a few locks of very white hair. Marius was struck by the beauty of his white hair, and noticed the man, who was walking with slow steps, and seemed absorbed in painful meditation. Strangely enough, it appeared to him that he recognized M. Leblanc. It was the same hair, the same profile, as far as the cap allowed him to see, the same manner, only sadder. But why these working-man's clothes? what did that mean? what did this disguise signify? Marius was astounded. When he came to himself, his first impulse was to follow the man; who knows but he had at last caught the trace which he was seeking? At all events, he must see the man again nearer, and clear up the enigma. But this idea occurred to him too late, the man was now gone. He had taken some little side-street, and Marius could not find him again. This adventure occupied his mind for a few days, and then faded away. "After all," said he to himself, "it is probably only a resemblance."

II.

MARIUS still lived in the Gorbeau tenement. He paid no attention to anybody there.

At this time, it is true, there were no occupants remaining in the house but himself and those Jondrettes whose rent he had once paid, without having ever spoken, however, either to the father, or to the mother, or to the daughters. The other tenants had moved away or died, or had been turned out for not paying their rent.

One day, in the course of this winter, the sun shone a little in the afternoon, but it was the second of February. Marius had just left his lodging; night was falling. It was his dinner hour; for it was still necessary for him to go to dinner, alas!—oh, infirmity of the ideal passions!

The Noxious Poor.

He had just crossed his door-sill, which Ma'am Bougon was sweeping at that very moment, muttering at the same time this memorable monologue,—

"What is there that is cheap now? everything is dear. There is nothing but people's trouble that is cheap; that comes for nothing, people's trouble."

Marius went slowly up the boulevard towards the *barrière*, on the way to the Rue Saint Jacques. He was walking thoughtfully, with his head down.

Suddenly he felt he was elbowed in the dusk; he turned, and saw two young girls in rags, one tall and slender, the other a little shorter, passing rapidly by, breathless, frightened, and apparently in flight; they had met him, had not seen him, and had jostled him in passing. Marius could see in the twilight their livid faces, their hair tangled and flying, their frightful bonnets, their tattered skirts, and their naked feet. As they ran they were talking to each other. The taller one said in a very low voice,—

"The slops came. They just missed me at the *demi-cercle*."

The other answered, "I saw them. I sloped, sloped, sloped."

Marius understood, through this dismal argot, that the gendarmes, or the city police, had not succeeded in seizing these two girls, and that the girls had escaped.

They plunged in under the trees of the boulevard behind him, and for a few seconds made a kind of dim whiteness in the obscurity, which soon faded out.

Marius stopped for a moment.

He was about to resume his course when he perceived a little greyish packet on the ground at his feet. He stooped down and picked it up. It was a sort of envelope, which appeared to contain papers.

"Good," said he, "those poor creatures must have dropped this!"

He retraced his steps, he called, he did not find them ; he concluded they were already beyond hearing, put the packet in his pocket, and went to dinner.

On his way, in an alley on the Rue Mouffetard, he saw a child's coffin covered with a black cloth, placed upon three chairs and lighted by a candle. The two girls of the twilight returned to his mind.

"Poor mothers !" thought he. "There is one thing sadder than to see their children die—to see them lead evil lives."

Then these shadows which had varied his sadness went out from his thoughts, and he fell back into his customary train. He began to think of his six months of love and happiness in the open air and the broad daylight under the beautiful trees of the Luxembourg.

"How dark my life has become !" said he to himself "Young girls still pass before me. Only, formerly they were angels : now they are ghouls."

III.

IN the evening, as he was undressing to go to bed, he happened to feel in his coat-pocket the packet which he had picked up on the boulevard. He had forgotten it. He thought it might be well to open it, and that the packet might perhaps contain the address of the young girls, if, in reality, it belonged to them, or at all events the information necessary to restore it to the person who had lost it.

He opened the envelope.

It was unsealed, and contained four letters, also unsealed. The addresses were upon them.

All four exhaled an odour of wretched tobacco.

The first letter was addressed : *To Madame, Madame the Marchioness de Grucherau, Square opposite the Chamber of Deputies, No —.*

Marius said to himself that he should probably find in this letter the information of which he was in search, and that, moreover, as the letter was not sealed, probably it might be read without impropriety.

It was in these words :—

“ Madame the Marchioness,—

“The virtue of kindness and piety is that which binds society most closely. Call up your christian sentiment, and cast a look of compassion upon this unfortunate Spanish victim of loyalty and attachment to the sacred cause of legitimacy, which he has paid for with his blood, consecrated his fortune, wholly, to defend this cause, and to-day finds himself in the greatest misery. He has no doubt that your honorable self will furnish him assistance to preserve an existence extremely painful for a soldier of education and of honor full of wounds, reckons in advance upon the humanity which animates you and upon the interest which Madame the Marchioness feels in a nation so unfortunate. Their prayer will not be in vain, and their memory will retain her charming souvenir.

“From my respectful sentiments with which I have the honor to be

“ Madame,

“DON ALVARES, Spanish captain of cavalry, royalist refuge in France, who finds himself traveling for his country and resources fail him to continue his travels.”

No address was added to the signature. Marius hoped to find the address in the second letter, the superscription of which ran: *to Madame, Madame the Comtess of Montvernet, Rue Cassette, No. 9.* Marius read as follows :—

“ Madame the Comtess,

“It is an unfortunate mother of a family of six children the last of whom is only eight months old. Me sick since my last lying-in, abandoned by my husband for five months

having no resource in the world the most frightful indignance.

"In the hope of Madame the Comtesse, she has the honor to be, Madame, with a profound respect,

"Mother BALIZARD."

Marius passed to the third letter, which was, like the preceding, a begging one ; it read :—

"Monsieur Pabourgeot, elector, wholesale merchant-milliner, Rue Saint Denis, corner of the Rue aux Fers.

"I take the liberty to address you this letter to pray you to accord me the pretious favor of your simpathies and to interest you in a man of letters who has just sent a drama to the Théâtre Français. Its subject is historical, and the action takes place in Auvergne in the time of the Empire its style, I believe, is natural, laconic, and perhaps has some merit. There are verses to be sung in four places. The comic, the serious, the unforeseen, mingle themselves with the variety of the characters and with a tint of romance spread lightly over all the plot which advances misteriously, and by striking terns, to a denouement in the midst of several hits of splendid scenes.

"My principal object is to satisfie the desire which animates progressively the man of our century, that is to say, fashion, that caprisious and grotesque weathercock which changes almost with every new wind.

"In spite of these qualities I have reason to fear that jealousy, the selfishness of the privileged authors, may secure my exclusion from the theatre, for I am not ignorant of the distaste with which new-comers are swallowed.

"Monsieur Pabourgeot, your just reputation as an enlightened protector of literary fokes emboldens me to send n.y daughter to you, who will expose to you our indignant situation, wanting bread and fire in this wynter season. To tell you that I pray you to accept the homage which I

desire to offer you in my drama and in all those which I make, is to prove to you how ambitious I am of the honor of sheltering myself under your aegis, and of adorning my writings with your name. If you deign to honor me with the most modest offering, I shall occupy myself immediately in making a piéce of verse for you to pay my tribut of recognition. This piéce, which I shall endeavor to render as perfect as possible, will be sent to you before being inserted in the beginning of the drama and given upon the stage.

“To Monsieur

“and Madam Pabourgeout,

“My most respectful homage,

“GENFLOT, man of letters.

“P.S. Were it only forty sous.

“Excuse me for sending my daughter and for not presenting myself, but sad motives of dress do not permit me, alas ! to go out——”

Marius finally opened the fourth letter. There was on the address : *To the beneficent gentleman of the church Saint Jacques du Haut Pas.* It contained these few lines :—

“Beneficent man,

“If you will deign to accompany my daughter, you will see a misserable calamity, and I will show you my certificates.

“At the sight of these writings your generous soul will be moved with a sentiment of lively benevolence, for true philosophers always experience vivid emotions.

“Agree, compassionate man, that one must experience the most cruel necessity, and that it is very painful, to obtain relief, to have it attested by authority as if we were not free to suffer and to die of inanition while waiting for some one to relieve our misery. The fates are very cruel to some and too lavish or too careful to others.

"I await your presence or your offering, if you deign to make it, and I pray you to have the kindness to accept the respectful sentiments with which I am proud to be,

"Truly magnanimous man,

"Your very humble

"And very humble servant,

"P. FABANTOU, dramatic artist."

After reading these four letters, Marius did not find himself much wiser than before.

In the first place none of the signers gave his address.

Then they seemed to come from four different individuals, Don Alvarès, Mother Balizard, the poet Genflot, and the dramatic artist Fabantou ; but, strangely enough, these letters were all four written in the same hand.

What was the conclusion from that, unless that they came from the same person ?

Moreover, and this rendered the conjecture still more probable, the paper, coarse and yellow, was the same in all four, the odour of tobacco was the same, and although there was an evident endeavour to vary the style, the same faults of orthography were reproduced with a very quiet certainty, and Genflot, the man of letters, was no more free from them than the Spanish captain.

To endeavour to unriddle this little mystery was a useless labour. If it had not been a waif, it would have had the appearance of a mystification. Marius was too sad to take a joke kindly even from chance, or to lend himself to the game which the street pavement seemed to wish to play with him. It appeared to him that he was like Colin Maillard among the four letters, which were mocking him.

Nothing, however, indicated that these letters belonged to the girls whom Marius had met on the boulevard. After all, they were but waste paper, evidently without value.

Marius put them back into the envelope, threw it into a corner, and went to bed.

About seven o'clock in the morning, he had got up and breakfasted, and was trying to set about his work when there was a gentle rap at his door.

As he owned nothing, he never locked his door, except sometimes, and that very rarely, when he was about some pressing piece of work. And, indeed, even when absent, he left his key in the lock. "You will be robbed," said Ma'am Bougon. "Of what?" said Marius. The fact is, however, that one day somebody had stolen an old pair of boots, to the great triumph of Ma'am Bougon.

There was a second rap, very gentle like the first.

"Come in," said Marius.

The door opened.

"What do you want, Ma'am Bougon?" asked Marius, without raising his eyes from the books and papers which he had on his table.

A voice, which was not Ma'am Bougon's, answered,—

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur——."

It was a hollow, cracked, smothered, rasping voice, the voice of an old man, roughened by brandy and by liquors.

Marius turned quickly and saw a young girl.

IV.

A GIRL, who was quite young, was standing in the half-opened door. The little round window through which the light found its way into the garret was exactly opposite the door, and lit up this form with a pallid light. It was a pale, puny, meagre creature; nothing but a chemise and a skirt covered a shivering and chilly nakedness. A string for a belt, a string for a head-dress, sharp shoulders protruding from the chemise, a blond and lymphatic pallor,

dirty shoulder-blades, red hands, the mouth open and sunken, some teeth gone, the eyes dull, bold, and drooping—the form of an unripe young girl, and the look of a corrupted old woman ; fifty years joined with fifteen ; one of those beings who are both feeble and horrible at once, and who make those shudder whom they do not make weep.

Marius arose and gazed with a kind of astonishment upon this being, so much like the shadowy forms which pass across our dreams.

The most touching thing about it was that this young girl had not come into the world to be ugly. In her early childhood she must have even been pretty. The grace of her youth was still struggling against the hideous old age brought on by debauchery and poverty. A remnant of beauty was dying out upon this face of sixteen, like the pale sun which is extinguished by frightful clouds at the dawn of a winter's day.

This face was not absolutely unknown to Marius. He thought he remembered having seen it somewhere.

“What do you wish, Mademoiselle?” asked he.

The young girl answered, with her voice like a drunken galley-slave's,—

“Here is a letter for you, Monsieur Marius.”

She called Marius by his name ; he could not doubt that her business was with him ; but what was this girl ? how did she know his name ?

Without waiting for an invitation, she entered. She entered resolutely, looking at the whole room and the unmade bed with a sort of assurance which chilled the heart. She was bare-footed. Great holes in her skirt revealed her long limbs and her sharp knees. She was shivering.

She had really in her hand a letter, which she presented to Marius.

Marius, in opening this letter, noticed that the enormously large wafer was still wet. The message could not have come far. He read,—

“My amiable neighbor, young man!

“I have lerned your kindness towards me, that you have paid my rent six months ago. I bless you, young man. My eldest daughter will tell you that we have been without a morsel of bread for two days, four persons, and my spouse sick. If I am not desseived by my thoughts, I think I may hope that your generous heart will soften at this exposure, and that the desire will subjugate you of being propitious to me by deigning to lavish upon me some light gift.

“I am, with the distinguished consideration which is due to the benefactors of humanity,

“JONDRETTE.

“P.S.—My daughter will await your orders, dear Monsieur Marius.”

This letter, in the midst of the obscure accident which had occupied Marius's thoughts since the previous evening, was a candle in a cave. Everything was suddenly cleared up.

This letter came from the same source as the other four. It was the same writing, the same style, the same orthography, the same paper, the same odour of tobacco.

There were five missives, five stories, five names, five signatures, and a single signer. The Spanish Captain Don Alvarès, the unfortunate mother Balizard, the dramatic poet Genflot, the old comedy writer Fabantou, were all four named Jondrette, if indeed the name of Jondrette himself was Jondrette.

During the now rather long time that Marius had lived in the tenement he had had, as we have said, but very few opportunities to see, or even catch a glimpse of his very

poor neighbours. His mind was elsewhere, and where the mind is, thither the eyes are directed. He must have met the Jondrettes in the passage and on the stairs, more than once, but to him they were only shadows ; he had taken so little notice, that on the previous evening he had brushed against the Jondrette girls upon the boulevard without recognizing them—for it was evidently they ; and it was with great difficulty that this girl, who had just come into his room, had awakened in him, beneath his disgust and pity, a vague remembrance of having met with her elsewhere.

Now he saw everything clearly. He understood that the occupation of his neighbour Jondrette, in his distress, was to work upon the sympathies of benevolent persons ; that he procured their addresses, and that he wrote under assumed names letters to people whom he deemed rich and compassionate, which his daughters carried, at their risk and peril ; for this father was one who risked his daughters ; he was playing a game with destiny, and he put them into the stake. Marius understood, to judge by their flight in the evening, by their breathlessness, by their terror, by those words of argot which he had heard, that probably these unfortunate things were carrying on also some of the secret trades of darkness, and that from all this the result was, in the midst of human society constituted as it is, two miserable beings who were neither children, nor girls, nor women—a species of impure yet innocent monsters produced by misery.

Sad creatures without name, without age, without sex, to whom neither good nor evil were any longer possible, and for whom, on leaving childhood, there is nothing more in this world, neither liberty, nor virtue, nor responsibility. Souls blooming yesterday, faded to-day, like those flowers which fall in the street and are bespattered by the mud before a wheel crushes them.

Meantime, while Marius fixed upon her an astonished

and sorrowful look, the young girl was walking to and fro in the room with the boldness of a spectre. She bustled about regardless of her nakedness. At times, her chemise, unfastened and torn, fell almost to her waist. She moved the chairs, she disarranged the toilet articles on the bureau, she felt of Marius's clothes, she searched over what there was in the corners.

"Ah," said she, "you have a mirror!"

And she hummed, as if she had been alone, snatches of songs, light refrains which were made dismal by her harsh and guttural voice. Beneath this boldness could be perceived an indescribable constraint, restlessness, and humility. Effrontery is a shame.

Nothing was more sorrowful than to see her amusing herself, and, so to speak, fluttering about the room with the movements of a bird which is startled by the light, or which has a wing broken. You felt that under other conditions of education and of destiny, the gay and free manner of this young girl might have been something sweet and charming. Never among animals does the creature which is born to be a dove change into an osprey. That is seen only among men.

Marius was reflecting, and let her go on.

She went to the table.

"Ah," said she, "books!"

A light flashed through her glassy eye. She resumed, and her tone expressed that happiness of being able to boast of something, to which no human creature is insensible,—

"I can read, I can."

She hastily caught up the book which lay open on the table, and read fluently,—

"—General Bauduin received the order to take five battalions of his brigade and carry the château of Hougomont, which is in the middle of the plain of Waterloo——"

She stopped.

"Ah, Waterloo! I know that. It is a battle in old times. My father was there; my father served in the armies. We are jolly good Bonapartists at home, that we are. Against English, Waterloo is."

She put down the book, took up a pen, and exclaimed,—

"And I can write, too!"

She dipped the pen in the ink, and turning towards Marius,—

"Would you like to see? Here, I am going to write a word to show."

And before he had had time to answer, she wrote upon a sheet of blank paper which was on the middle of the table, "*The slops are here.*"

Then, throwing down the pen,—

"There are no mistakes in spelling. You can look. We have received an education, my sister and I. We have not always been what we are. We were not made——"

Here she stopped, fixed her faded eye upon Marius, and burst out laughing, saying in a tone which contained complete anguish stifled by complete cynicism,—

"Bah!"

And she began to hum a lively air.

Hardly had she finished a stanza when she exclaimed,—

"Do you ever go to the theatre, Monsieur Marius? I do. I have a little brother who is a friend of some artists, and who gives me tickets sometimes. Now, I do not like the seats in the galleries. You are crowded, you are uncomfortable. There are sometimes coarse people there; there are also people who smell bad."

Then she looked at Marius, put on a strange manner, and said to him,—

"Do you know, Monsieur Marius, that you are a very handsome boy?"

And at the same time the same thought occurred to both of them, which made her smile and made him blush.

She went to him, and laid her hand on his shoulder,—
“You pay no attention to me, but I know you, Monsieur Marius. I meet you here on the stairs, and then I see you visiting a man named Father Maberif, who lives out by Austerlitz, sometimes, when I am walking that way. That becomes you very well, your tangled hair.”

Her voice tried to be soft, but succeeded only in being very low. Some of her words were lost in their passage from the larynx to the lips, as upon a key-board in which some notes are missing.

Marius had drawn back quietly.

“Mademoiselle,” said he, with his cold gravity, “I have here a packet, which is yours, I think. Permit me to return it to you.”

And he handed her the envelope, which contained the four letters.

She clapped her hands and exclaimed,—

“We have looked everywhere !”

Then she snatched the packet, and opened the envelope, saying,—

“Lordy, Lordy, haven’t we looked, my sister and I? And you have found it ! on the boulevard, didn’t you? It must have been on the boulevard? You see, this dropped when we ran. It was my brat of a sister who made the stupid blunder. When we got home, we could not find it. As we did not want to be beaten, since that is needless, since that is entirely needless, since that is absolutely needless, we said at home that we had carried the letters to the persons, and that they told us—“Nix !” Now here they are, these poor letters. And how did you know they were mine? Ah, yes ! by the writing ! It was you, then, that we knocked against last evening. We did not see you, really ! I said to my sister, ‘Is that a gentleman?’ My sister said, ‘I think it is a gentleman !’”

Meanwhile, she had unfolded the petition addressed “to

the beneficent gentleman of the church **Saint Jacques du Haut Pas.**"

"Here!" said she, "this is for the old fellow who goes to mass. And this, too, is the hour. I am going to carry it to him. He will give us something, perhaps, for breakfast."

Then she began to laugh, and added,—

"Do you know what it will be if we have breakfast to-day? It will be that we shall have had our breakfast for day before yesterday, our dinner for day before yesterday, our breakfast for yesterday, our dinner for yesterday, all that at one time this morning. Yes! zounds! if you're not satisfied, stuff till you burst, dogs!"

This reminded Marius of what the poor girl had come to his room for.

He felt in his waistcoat, he found nothing there.

The young girl continued, seeming to talk as if she were no longer conscious that Marius was there present,—

"Sometimes I go away at night. Sometimes I do not come back. Before coming to this place, the other winter, we lived under the arches of the bridges. We hugged close to each other so as not to freeze. My little sister cried, 'How chilly the water is!' When I thought of drowning myself, I said, 'No; it is too cold.' I go all alone when I want to. I sleep in the ditches sometimes. Do you know, at night, when I walk on the boulevard, I see the trees like gibbets; I see all the great black houses like the towers of Notre Dame; I imagine that the white walls are the river, I say to myself, 'Here, there is water there!' The stars are like illumination lamps; one would say that they smoke, and that the wind blows them out. I am confused, as if I had horses breathing in my ear; though it is night, I hear hand-organs and spinning wheels, I don't know what. I think that somebody is throwing stones at me; I run without knowing it; it is all a whirl—all a whirl. When one has not eaten, it is very queer."

And she looked at him with a wandering eye.

After a thorough exploration of his pockets, Marius had at last got together five francs and sixteen sous. This was at the time all that he had in the world. "That is enough for my dinner to-day," thought he, "to-morrow we will see." He took the sixteen sous, and gave the five francs to the young girl.

She took the piece eagerly.

"Good," said she, "there is some sunshine!"

And as if the sun had had the effect to loosen an avalanche of argot in her brain, she continued,—

"Five francs! a shiner! a monarch! in this *piolle*! it is *chenâtre*! You are a good *mion*."

She drew her chemise up over her shoulders, made a low bow to Marius, then a familiar wave of the hand, and moved towards the door, saying,—

"Good morning, monsieur. It is all the same. I am going to find my old man."

On her way she saw on the bureau a dry crust of bread mouldering there in the dust; she sprang upon it, and bit it, muttering,—

"That is good! it is hard! it breaks my teeth!"

Then she went out.

V.

For five years Marius had lived in poverty, in privation, in distress even, but he perceived that he had never known real misery. Real misery he had just seen. It was this sprite which had just passed before his eyes. In fact, he who has seen the misery of man only has seen nothing, he must see the misery of woman; he who has seen the misery of woman only has seen nothing, he must see the misery of childhood.

When man has reached the last extremity, he comes, at the same time, to the last expedients. Woe to the defenceless beings who surround him ! Work, wages, bread, fire, courage, willingness, all fail him at once. The light of day seems to die away without, the moral light dies out within ; in this gloom, man meets the weakness of woman and childhood, and puts them by force to ignominious uses.

Then all horrors are possible. Despair is surrounded by fragile walls which all open into vice or crime.

Health, youth, honour, the holy and passionate delicacies of the still tender flesh, the heart, virginity, modesty—that epidermis of the soul—are fatally disposed of by that blind groping which seeks for aid, which meets degradation, and which accommodates itself to it. Fathers, mothers, children, brothers, sisters, men, women, girls, cling together, and almost grow together like a mineral formation, in that dark promiscuity of sexes, of relationships, of ages, of infancy, of innocence. They crouch down, back to back, in a kind of fate-hovel. They glance at one another sorrowfully. Oh, the unfortunate ! how pallid they are ! how cold they are ! It seems as though they were on a planet much further from the sun than we.

This young girl was to Marius a sort of messenger from the night.

She revealed to him an entire and hideous aspect of the darkness.

Marius almost reproached himself with the fact that he had been so absorbed in his reveries and passion, that he had not until now cast a glance upon his neighbours. Paying their rent was a mechanical impulse ; everybody would have had that impulse ; but he, Marius, should have done better. For had they had another neighbour, a less chimerical and more observant neighbour, an ordinary and charitable man, it was clear that their poverty would have been noticed, their signals of distress would have been

seen, and long ago, perhaps, they would have been gathered up and saved ! Undoubtedly they seemed very depraved, very corrupt, very vile, very hateful even ; but those are rare who fall without becoming degraded. There is a point, moreover, at which the unfortunate and the infamous are associated and confounded in a single word—a fatal word—*Les Misérables*. Whose fault is it ? And, then, is it not when the fall is lowest that charity ought to be greatest ?

While he thus preached to himself—for there were times when Marius, like all truly honest hearts, was his own monitor, and scolded himself more than he deserved—he looked at the wall which separated him from the Jondrettes, as if he could send his pitying glance through that partition to warn those unfortunate beings. The wall was a thin layer of plaster, upheld by laths and joists, through which, as we have just seen, voices and words could be distinguished perfectly. None but the dreamer, Marius, would not have perceived this before. There was no paper hung on this wall, either on the side of the Jondrettes or on Marius's side ; its coarse construction was bare to the eye. Almost unconsciously, Marius examined this partition ; sometimes reverie examines, observes, and scrutinizes, as thought would do. Suddenly he arose ; he noticed towards the top, near the ceiling, a triangular hole, where three laths left a space between them. The plaster which should have stopped this hole was gone, and by getting upon the bureau he could see through that hole into the Jondrettes' garret. Pity has, and should have, its curiosity. This hole was a kind of Judas. It is lawful to look upon misfortune like a betrayer for the sake of relieving it. "Let us see what these people are," thought Marius, "and to what they are reduced."

He climbed upon the bureau, put his eye to the crevice and looked.

VI.

CITIES, like forests, have their dens in which hide all their vilest and most terrible monsters. But in cities, what hides thus is ferocious, unclean, and petty, that is to say, ugly ; in forests, what hides is ferocious, savage, and grand, that is to say, beautiful. Den for den, those of beasts are preferable to those of men. Caverns are better than the wretched holes which shelter humanity.

What Marius saw was a hole.

Marius was poor, and his room was poorly furnished, but, even as his poverty was noble, his garret was clean. The den into which his eyes were at that moment directed was abject, filthy, fetid, infectious, gloomy, unclean. All the furniture was a straw chair, a rickety table, a few old broken dishes, and in two of the corners two indescribable pallets ; all the light came from a dormer window of four panes, curtained with spiders' webs. Just enough light came through that loophole to make a man's face appear like the face of a phantom. The walls had a leprous look, and were covered with seams and scars like a face disfigured by some horrible malady ; a putrid moisture oozed from them. Obscene pictures could be discovered upon them coarsely sketched in charcoal.

The room which Marius occupied had a broken brick pavement ; this one was neither paved nor floored ; the inmates walked immediately upon the old plastering of the ruinous tenement, which had grown black under their feet. Upon this uneven soil, where the dust was, as it were, incrustated, and which was virgin soil in respect only of the broom, were grouped at random constellations of socks, old shoes, and hideous rags ; however, this room had a fireplace, so it rented for forty francs a year. In the fire-

place there was a little of everything—a chafing-dish, a kettle, some broken boards, rags hanging on nails, a bird-cage, some ashes, and even a little fire. Two embers were smoking sullenly.

The size of this garret added still more to its horror. It had projections, angles, black holes, recesses under the roof, bays, and promontories. Beyond were hideous, unfathomable corners, which seemed as if they must be full of spiders as big as one's fist, centipedes as large as one's foot, and perhaps even some unknown monsters.

One of the pallets was near the door, the other near the window. Each had one end next the chimney, and both were opposite Marius. In a corner near the opening through which Marius was looking, hanging upon the wall in a black wooden frame, was a coloured engraving at the bottom of which was written in large letters, "THE DREAM." It represented a sleeping woman and a sleeping child, the child upon the woman's lap, an eagle in a cloud with a crown in his beak, and the woman putting away the crown from the child's head, but without waking; in the background Napoleon in a halo, leaning against a large blue column with a yellow capital adorned with this inscription:—

"MARINGO
AUSTERLITS
IENA
WAGRAMME
ELOUT."

Below this frame a sort of wooden panel, longer than it was wide, was standing on the floor, and leaning at an angle against the wall. It had the appearance of a picture set against the wall, of a frame probably daubed on the other side, of a pier glass taken down from a wall and forgotten to be hung again.

By the table, upon which Marius saw a pen, ink, and paper, was seated a man of about sixty, small, thin, livid, haggard, with a keen, cruel, and restless air—a hideous harpy.

Lavater, if he could have studied this face, would have found in it a mixture of vulture and pettifogger; the bird of prey and the man of tricks rendering each other ugly and complete, the man of tricks making the bird of prey ignoble, the bird of prey making the man of tricks horrible.

This man had a long grey beard. He was dressed in a woman's chemise, which showed his shaggy breast and his naked arms bristling with grey hairs. Below this chemise were a pair of muddy pantaloons, and boots from which the toes stuck out.

He had a pipe in his mouth, and was smoking. There was no more bread in the den, but there was tobacco.

He was writing, probably some such letter as those which Marius had read.

On one corner of the table was an old odd volume with a reddish cover, the size of which, the old duodecimo of series of books, betrayed that it was a novel. On the cover was displayed the following title, printed in huge capitals, "GOD, THE KING, HONOUR AND THE LADIES, BY DUCRAY DUMINIL, 1814."

As he wrote, the man talked aloud, and Marius heard his words:—

"To think that there is no equality even when we are dead! Look at Père Lachaise! The great, those who are rich, are in the upper part, in the avenue of the acacias, which is paved. They can go there in a carriage. The low, the poor, the unfortunate, they are put in the lower part, where there is mud up to the knees, in holes, in the wet. They are put there so that they may rot sooner!

You cannot go to see them without sinking into the ground."

Here he stopped, struck his fist on the table, and added, gnashing his teeth,—

"Oh ! I could eat the world !"

A big woman, who might have been forty years old or a hundred, was squatting near the fireplace, upon her bare feet.

She also was dressed only in a chemise and a knit skirt patched with pieces of old cloth. A coarse tow apron covered half the skirt. Although this woman was bent and drawn up into herself, it could be seen that she was very tall. She was a kind of giantess by the side of her husband. She had hideous hair, light red sprinkled with grey, that she pushed back from time to time with her huge shining hands, which had flat nails.

Lying on the ground, at her side, wide open, was a volume of the same appearance as the other, and probably of the same novel.

Upon one of the pallets Marius could discern a sort of slender little wan girl seated, almost naked, with her feet hanging down, having the appearance neither of listening, nor of seeing, nor of living.

The younger sister, doubtless, of the one who had come to his room.

She appeared to be eleven or twelve years old. On examining her attentively, he saw that she must be fourteen. It was the child who, the evening before, on the Boulevard, said, "I sloped, sloped, sloped !"

She was of that sickly species which long remains backward, then pushes forward rapidly, and all at once. These sorry human plants are produced by want. These poor creatures have neither childhood nor youth. At fifteen, they appear to be twelve ; at sixteen, they appear to be twenty. To-day, a little girl ; to-morrow, a woman. One

would say that they leap through life, to have done with it sooner.

This being now had the appearance of a child.

Nothing, moreover, indicated the performance of any labour in this room ; not a loom, not a wheel, not a tool. In one corner a few scraps of iron of an equivocal appearance. It was that gloomy idleness which follows despair, and which precedes the death-agony.

Marius looked for some time into that funereal interior, more fearful than the interior of a tomb ; for here were felt the movements of a human soul, and the palpitation of life.

The garret, the cellar, the deep ditch, in which some of the wretched crawl at the bottom of the social edifice, are not the sepulchre itself—they are its antechamber ; but, like those rich men who display their greatest magnificence at the entrance of their palace, death, who is close at hand, seems to display his greatest wretchedness in this vestibule.

The man became silent, the woman did not speak, the girl did not seem to breathe. Marius could hear the pen scratching over the paper.

The man muttered out, without ceasing to write, “Rabble ! rabble ! all is rabble !”

This variation upon the ejaculation of Solomon drew a sigh from the woman.

“My darling, be calm,” said she. “Do not hurt yourself, dear. You are too good to write to all those people my man.”

In poverty bodies hug close to each other, as in the cold, but hearts grow distant. This woman, according to all appearance, must have loved this man with as much love as was in her ; but probably, in the repeated mutual reproaches which grew out of the frightful distress that weighed upon them all, this love had become extinguished. She now felt towards her husband nothing more than the

ashes of affection. Still the words of endearment, as often happens, had survived. She said to him, "*Dear ; my darling ; my man,*" &c., with her lips ; her heart was silent.

The man returned to his writing.

VII

MARIUS, with a heavy heart, was about to get down from the sort of observatory which he had extemporized, when a sound attracted his attention, and induced him to remain in his place.

The door of the garret was hastily opened. The eldest daughter appeared upon the threshold. On her feet she had coarse men's shoes, covered with mud, which had been spattered as high as her red ankles, and she was wrapped in a ragged old gown which Marius had not seen upon her an hour before, but which she had probably left at his door that she might inspire the more pity, and which she must have put on upon going out. She came in, pushed the door to behind her, stopped to take breath, for she was quite breathless, then cried with an expression of joy and triumph,—

"He is coming !"

The father turned his eyes, the woman turned her head, the younger sister did not stir.

"Who?" asked the father.

"The gentleman !"

"The philanthropist ?"

"Yes."

"Of the church of Saint Jacques ?"

"Yes."

"That old man ?"

"Yes."

"He is going to come ?"

“He is behind me.”

“You are sure?”

“I am sure.”

“There, true, he is coming?”

“He is coming in a fiacre.”

“In a fiacre. It is Rothschild?”

The father arose.

“How are you sure? If he is coming in a fiacre, how is it that you get here before him? You gave him the address, at least? you told him the last door at the end of the hall on the right? provided he does not make a mistake? you found him at the church, then? did he read my letter? what did he say to you?”

“Tut, tut, tut!” said the girl, “how you run on, good-man! I’ll tell you: I went into the church, he was at his usual place, I made a curtsey to him, and I gave him the letter. He read it and said to me, ‘Where do you live, my child?’ I said, ‘Monsieur, I will show you.’ He said to me, ‘No, give me your address; my daughter has some purchases to make; I am going to take a carriage, and I will get to your house as soon as you do.’ I gave him the address. When I told him the house he appeared surprised, and hesitated an instant, then he said, ‘It is all the same, I will go.’ When Mass was over, I saw him leave the church with his daughter. I saw them get into a fiacre. And I told him plainly the last door at the end of the hall on the right.”

“And how do you know that he will come?”

“I just saw the fiacre coming into the Rue du Petit Banquier. That is what made me run.”

“How do you know it is the same fiacre?”

“Because I had noticed the number.”

“What is the number?”

“Four hundred and forty.”

“Good, you are a clever girl.”

The girl looked resolutely at her father, and showing the shoes which she had on, said,—

“A clever girl, that may be, but I tell you that I shall never put on these shoes again, and that I will not do it for health first, and then for decency’s sake. I know nothing more provoking than soles that squeak and go ghee! ghee! ghee! all along the street. I would rather go barefoot.”

“You are right,” answered the father, in a mild tone, which contrasted with the rudeness of the young girl, “but they would not let you go into the churches; the poor must have shoes. People do not go to God’s house barefooted,” added he, bitterly. Then returning to the subject which occupied his thoughts,—

“And you are sure, then—sure that he is coming?”

“He is at my heels,” said she.

The man sprang up. There was a sort of illumination on his face.

“Wife!” cried he, “you hear. Here is the philanthropist. Put out the fire.”

The astounded woman did not stir.

The father, with the agility of the mountebank, caught a broken pot which stood on the mantel, and threw some water upon the embers.

Then turning to his eldest daughter,—

“You! unbottom the chair!”

His daughter did not understand him at all.

He seized the chair, and with a kick he ruined the seat. His leg went through it.

As he drew out his leg, he asked his daughter,—

“Is it cold?”

“Very cold. It snows.”

The father turned towards the younger girl, who was on the pallet near the window, and cried in a thundering voice,—

"Quick ! off the bed, good-for-nothing ! will you never do anything ? break a pane of glass !"

The little girl sprang off the bed trembling.

"Break a pane of glass !" said he again.

The child was speechless.

"Do you hear me ?" repeated the father, "I tell you to break a pane !"

The child, with a sort of terrified obedience, rose upon tiptoe, and struck her fist into a pane. The glass broke and fell with a crash.

"Good !" said the father.

He was serious, yet rapid. His eye ran hastily over all the nooks and corners of the garret.

You would have said he was a general, making his final preparations at the moment when the battle was about to begin.

The mother, who had not yet said a word, got up and asked in a slow, muffled tone, her words seeming to come out as if curdled,—

"Dear, what is it you want to do ?"

"Get into bed," answered the man.

His tone admitted of no deliberation. The mother obeyed, and threw herself heavily upon one of the pallets.

Meanwhile a sob was heard in a corner.

"What is that ?" cried the father.

The younger daughter, without coming out of the darkness into which she had shrunk, showed her bleeding fist. In breaking the glass she had cut herself ; she had gone to her mother's bed, and she was weeping in silence.

It was the mother's turn to rise and cry out.

"You see now ! what stupid things you are doing ? breaking your glass, she has cut herself !"

"So much the better !" said the man. "I knew she would."

"How ! so much the better ?" resumed the woman.

"Silence!" replied the father. "I suppress the liberty of the press."

Then, tearing the chemise which he had on, he made a bandage, with which he hastily wrapped up the little girl's bleeding wrist.

That done, his eye fell upon the torn chemise with satisfaction.

"And the chemise too," said he, "all this has a good appearance."

An icy wind whistled at the window and came into the room. The mist from without entered and spread about like a whitish wadding picked apart by invisible fingers. Through the broken pane the falling snow was seen. The cold promised the day before by the Candlemas sun had come indeed.

The father cast a glance about him as if to assure himself that he had forgotten nothing. He took an old shovel and spread ashes over the moistened embers in such a way as to hide them completely.

Then rising and standing with his back to the chimney,—

"Now," said he, "we can receive the philanthropist."

VIII.

THE large girl went to her father and laid her hand on his.

"Feel how cold I am!" said she.

"Pshaw!" answered the father. "I am a good deal colder than that."

The mother cried impetuously,—

"You always have everything better than the rest, even pain."

"Down!" said the man.

The mother, after a peculiar look from the man, held her peace.

There was a moment of silence in the den. The eldest daughter was scraping the mud off the bottom of her dress with a careless air; the young sister continued to sob; the mother had taken her head in both hands and was covering her with kisses, saying to her in a low tone,—

"My treasure, I beg of you—it will be nothing—do not cry, you will make your father angry."

"No!" cried the father, "on the contrary! sob! sob! that does finely."

Then turning to the eldest,—

"Ah, but he does not come! If he was not coming, I shall have put out my fire, knocked the bottom out of my chair, torn my chemise, and broken my window for nothing."

"And cut the little girl!" murmured the mother.

"Do you know," resumed the father, "that it is as cold as a dog in this devilish garret? If this man should not come! Oh! that is it; he makes us wait for him! He says, 'Well! they will wait for me; that is what they are for!' Oh! how I hate them; and how I would strangle them with joy and rejoicing, enthusiasm and satisfaction, these rich men! all the rich! these professed charitable men, who make their plums, who go to Mass, who follow the priesthood, preachy, preachy, who give in to the cowls, and who think themselves above us, and who come to humiliate us, and to bring us clothes! as they call them! rags which are not worth four sous, and bread! that is not what I want of the rabble! I want money! But money, never! because they say that we would go and drink it, and that we are drunkards and do-nothings! And what then are they, and what have they been in their time? Thieves! they would not have got rich without that! Oh! somebody ought to

take society by the four corners of the sheet and toss it all into the air! Everything would be crushed, it is likely, but at least nobody would have anything, there would be so much gained! But what now is he doing, your mug of a benevolent gentleman? is he coming? The brute may have forgotten the address! I will bet that the old fool——”

Just then there was a light rap at the door, the man rushed forward and opened it, exclaiming with many low bows and smiles of adoration,—

“Come in, monsieur! deign to come in, my noble benefactor, as well as your charming young lady.”

A man of mature age and a young girl appeared at the door of the garret.

Marius had not left his place. What he felt at that moment escapes human language.

It was She.

Whoever has loved knows all the radiant meaning contained in the three letters of this word She.

It was indeed she. Marius could hardly discern her through the luminous vapour which suddenly spread over his eyes. It was that sweet absent being, that star which had been his light for six months; it was that eye, that brow, that mouth; that beautiful vanished face which had produced night when it went away. The vision had been in an eclipse, it was reappearing.

She appeared again in this gloom, in this garret, in this shapeless den, in this horror!

Marius shuddered desperately. What! it was she! The beating of his heart disturbed his sight. He felt ready to melt into tears. What! at last he saw her again after having sought for her so long! It seemed to him that he had lost his soul, and that he had just found it again.

She was still the same, a little paler only; her delicate face was set in a violet velvet hat, her form was hidden

under a black satin pelisse below her long dress he caught a glimpse of her little foot squeezed into a silk buskin.

She was still accompanied by Monsieur Leblanc.

She stepped into the room and laid a large package on the table.

The elder Jondrette girl had retreated behind the door and was looking upon that velvet hat, that silk dress, and that charming, happy face, with an evil eye.

IX.

THE den was so dark that people who came from outdoors felt as if they were entering a cellar on coming in. The two new comers stepped forward, therefore, with some hesitation, hardly discerning the dim forms about them, while they were seen and examined with perfect ease by the tenants of the garret, whose eyes were accustomed to this twilight.

Monsieur Leblanc approached with his kind, compassionate look, and said to the father,—

“Monsieur, you will find in this package some new clothes, some stockings, and some new coverlids.”

“Our angelic benefactor overwhelms us,” said Jondrette, bowing down to the floor. Then, stooping to his eldest daughter’s ear, while the two visitors were examining this lamentable abode, he added rapidly, in a whisper,—

“Well ! what did I tell you ? rags ? no money. They are all alike ! Tell me, how was the letter to this old blubber-lip signed ?”

“Fabantou,” answered the daughter.

“The dramatic artist, good !”

This was lucky for Jondrette, for at that very moment Monsieur Leblanc turned towards him and said to him,

with the appearance of one who is trying to recollect a name,—

“I see that you are indeed to be pitied, Monsieur——”

“Fabantou,” said Jondrette, quickly.

“Monsieur Fabantou, yes, that is it. I remember.”

“Dramatic artist, monsieur. and who has had his success.”

Here Jondrette evidently thought the moment come to make an impression upon the “philanthropist.” He exclaimed in a tone of voice which belongs to the braggadocio of the juggler at a fair, and, at the same time, to the humility of a beggar on the highway: “Pupil of Talma! monsieur! I am a pupil of Talma! Fortune once smiled on me. Alas! now it is the turn of misfortune. Look, my benefactor, no bread, no fire! My poor darlings have no fire! My only chair unseated! A broken window! in such weather as is this! My spouse in bed! sick!”

“Poor woman!” said Monsieur Leblanc.

“My child injured!” added Jondrette.

The child, whose attention had been diverted by the arrival of the strangers, was staring at “the young lady,” and had ceased her sobbing.

“Why don’t you cry? why don’t you scream?” said Jondrette to her, in a whisper.

At the same time he pinched her injured hand. All this with the skill of a juggler.

The little one uttered loud cries.

The adorable young girl whom Marius in his heart called “his Ursula” went quickly to her.

“Poor dear child!” said she.

“Look, my beautiful young lady,” pursued Jondrette, “her bleeding wrist! It is an accident which happened in working at a machine by which she earned six sous a day. It may be necessary to cut off her arm.”

“Indeed!” said the old gentleman, alarmed.

The little girl, taking this seriously, began to sob again beautifully.

"Alas, yes, my benefactor!" answered the father.

For some moments Jondrette had been looking at "the philanthropist" in a strange manner. Even while speaking he seemed to scrutinize him closely, as if he were trying to recall some reminiscence. Suddenly, taking advantage of a moment when the new-comers were anxiously questioning the smaller girl about her mutilated hand, he passed over to his wife, who was lying in her bed, appearing to be overwhelmed and stupid, and said to her quickly and in a very low tone,—

"Notice that man!"

Then turning towards M. Leblanc, and continuing his lamentation,—

"You see, monsieur! my whole dress is nothing but a chemise of my wife's! and that all torn! in the heart of winter. I cannot go out, for lack of a coat. If I had a sign of a coat, I should go to see Mademoiselle Mars, who knows me, and of whom I am a great favourite. She is still living in the Rue de la Tour des Dames, is not she? You know, monsieur, we have played together in the provinces. I shared her laurels. Celimène would come to my relief, monsieur! Elmira would give alms to Belisarius! But no, nothing! And not a sou in the house! My wife sick, not a sou! My daughter dangerously injured, not a sou! My spouse has choking fits. It is her time of life, and then the nervous system has something to do with it. She needs aid, and my daughter also! But the doctor! but the druggist! how can I pay them! not a penny! I would fall on my knees before a penny, monsieur! You see how the arts are fallen! And do you know, my charming young lady, and you, my generous patron, do you know, you who breathe virtue and goodness, and who perfume that church where my daughter, in going to say her prayers,

sees you every day? For I bring up my daughters religiously, monsieur. I have not allowed them to take to the theatre. Ah! the rogues! that I should see them tripping! I do not jest! I fortify them with sermons about honour, about morals, about virtue! Ask them! They must walk straight. They have a father. They are none of those unfortunates, who begin by having no family, and who end by marrying the public. They are Mamselle Nobody, and become Madame Everybody. Thank Heaven! none of that in the Fabantou family! I mean to educate them virtuously, and that they may be honest, and that they may be genteel, and that they may believe in God's sacred name! Well, monsieur, my worthy monsieur, do you know what is going to happen to-morrow? To-morrow is the 4th of February, the fatal day, the last delay that my landlord will give me; and if I do not pay him this evening, to-morrow my eldest daughter, myself, my spouse with her fever, my child with her wound, we shall all four be turned out of doors, and driven off into the street, upon the boulevard, without shelter, into the rain, upon the snow. You see, monsieur, I owe four quarters, a year! that is sixty francs."

Jondrette lied. Four quarters would have made but forty francs, and he could not have owed for four, since it was not six months since Marius had paid for two.

M. Leblanc took five francs from his pocket and threw them on the table.

Jondrette had time to mutter into the ear of his eldest daughter,—

"The whelp! what does he think I am going to do with his five francs? That will not pay for my chair and my window! I must make my expenses!"

Meantime M. Leblanc had taken off a large brown overcoat, which he wore over his blue surtout, and hung it over the back of the chair.

"Monsieur Fabantou," said he, "I have only these five francs with me; but I am going to take my daughter home, and I will return this evening; is it not this evening that you have to pay?"

Jondrette's face lighted up with a strange expression. He answered quickly,—

"Yes, my noble monsieur. At eight o'clock I must be at my landlord's."

"I will be here at six o'clock, and I will bring you the sixty francs."

"My benefactor!" cried Jondrette, distractedly.

And he added, in an undertone,—

"Take a good look at him, wife!"

M. Leblanc took the arm of the beautiful young girl, and turned towards the door.

"Till the evening, my friends," said he.

"Six o'clock," said Jondrette.

"Six o'clock precisely."

Just then the overcoat on the chair caught the eye of the eldest daughter.

"Monsieur," said she, "you forget your coat."

Jondrette threw a crushing glance at his daughter, accompanied by a terrible shrug of the shoulders.

M. Leblanc turned and answered with a smile,—

"I do not forget it, I leave it."

"O my patron," said Jondrette, "my noble benefactor, I am melting into tears! Allow me to conduct you to your carriage."

"If you go out," replied M. Leblanc, "put on this overcoat. It is really very cold."

Jondrette did not make him say it twice. He put on the brown overcoat very quickly.

And they went out all three, Jondrette preceding the two strangers.

X.

MARIUS had lost nothing of all this scene, and yet in reality he had seen nothing of it. His eyes had remained fixed upon the young girl, his heart had, so to speak, seized upon her and enveloped her entirely, from her first step into the garret. During the whole time she had been there, he had lived that life of ecstasy which suspends material perceptions and precipitates the whole soul upon a single point. He contemplated, not that girl, but that light in a satin pelisse and a velvet hat. Had the star Sirius entered the room he would not have been more dazzled.

While the young girl was opening the bundle, unfolding the clothes and the coverlids, questioning the sick mother kindly and the little injured girl tenderly, he watched all her motions—he endeavoured to hear her words. He knew her eyes, her forehead, her beauty, her stature, her gait, he did not know the sound of her voice. He thought he had caught a few words of it once at the Luxembourg, but he was not absolutely sure. He would have given ten years of his life to hear it, to be able to carry a little of that music in his soul. But all was lost in the wretched displays and trumpet blasts of Jondrette. This added a real anger to the transport of Marius. He brooded her with his eyes. He could not imagine that it really was that divine creature which he saw in the midst of the misshapen beings of this monstrous den. He seemed to see a humming-bird among toads.

When he went out he had but one thought, to follow her, not to give up her track, not to leave her without knowing where she lived, not to lose her again, at least, after having so miraculously found her! He leaped down

from the bureau and took his hat. As he was putting his hand on the bolt, and was just going out, he reflected and stopped. The hall was long, the stairs steep, Jondrette a great talker, M. Leblanc doubtless had not yet got into his carriage; if he should turn round in the passage, or on the stairs, or on the doorstep, and perceive him, Marius, in that house, he would certainly be alarmed and would find means to escape him anew, and it would be all over at once. What was to be done? wait a little? but during the delay the carriage might go. Marius was perplexed. At last he took the risk and went out of his room.

There was nobody in the hall. He ran to the stairs. There was nobody on the stairs. He hurried down, and reached the boulevard in time to see a fiacre turn the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier and return into the city.

Marius rushed in that direction. When he reached the corner of the boulevard, he saw the fiacre again going down the Rue Mouffetard: the fiacre was already at a long distance, there was no means of reaching it; what should he do? run after it? impossible; and then from the carriage they would certainly notice a man running at full speed in pursuit of them, and the father would recognize him. Just at this moment—marvellous and unheard-of good fortune—Marius saw a public cab passing along the boulevard, empty. There was but one course to take, to get into this cab, and follow the fiacre. That was sure, effectual, and without danger.

Marius made a sign to the driver to stop, and cried to him—

“Right away!”

Marius had no cravat, he had on his old working coat, some of the buttons of which were missing, and his shirt was torn in one of the plaits of the bosom.

The driver stopped, winked, and reached his left hand

towards Marius, rubbing his forefinger gently with his thumb.

"What?" said Marius.

"Pay in advance," said the driver.

Marius remembered that he had only sixteen sous with him.

"How much?" he asked.

"Forty sous."

"I will pay when I get back."

The driver made no reply, but to whistle an air from La Palisse and whip up his horse.

Marius saw the cab move away with a bewildered air. For the want of twenty-four sous he was losing his joy, his happiness, his love! he was falling back into night! he had seen, and he was again becoming blind. He thought bitterly, and it must indeed be said, with deep regret, of the five francs he had given that very morning to that miserable girl. Had he had those five francs he would have been saved, he would have been born again, he would have come out of limbo and darkness, he would have come out of his isolation, his spleen, his bereavement; he would have again knotted the black thread of his destiny with that beautiful golden thread which had just floated before his eyes and broken off once more! He returned to the old tenement in despair.

He might have thought that M. Leblanc had promised to return in the evening, and that he had only to take better care to follow him then; but in his wrapt contemplation, he had hardly understood it.

Just as he went up the stairs, he noticed on the other side of the boulevard, beside the deserted wall of the Rue de la Barrière des Gobelins, Jondrette in the "philanthropist's" overcoat, talking to one of those men of dangerous appearance, who, by common consent, are called *prowlers of the barrières*; men of equivocal faces, suspicious speech,

who have an appearance of evil intentions, and who usually sleep by day, which leads us to suppose that they work by night.

These two men quietly talking while the snow was whirling about them in its fall made a picture which a policeman certainly would have observed, but which Marius hardly noticed.

Nevertheless, however mournful was the subject of his reflections, he could not help saying to himself that this prowler of the *barrières* with whom Jondrette was talking, resembled a certain Panchaud, alias Printanier, alias Bigrenaille, whom Courfeyrac had once pointed out to him, and who passed in the *quartier* for a very dangerous night wanderer. This Panchaud, alias Printanier, alias Bigrenaille, figured afterwards in several criminal trials, and has since become a celebrated scoundrel. He was still at that time only a notorious scoundrel. He is now a matter of tradition among bandits and assassins. He was the head of a school near the close of the last reign. And in the evening, at nightfall, at the hour when crowds gather and speak low, he was talked about at the La Force in La Fosse aux Lions. You might even, in that prison, just at the spot where that privy sewer which served for the astonishing escape of thirty prisoners in broad day in 1843, passes under the encircling passage-way ; you might, above the flagging of that sewer, read his name, PANCHAUD, audaciously cut by himself upon the outer wall in one of his attempts to escape. In 1832, the police already had him under their eye, but he had not yet really made his début.

XI.

MARIUS mounted the stairs of the old tenement with slow steps ; just as he was going into his cell, he perceived in

the hall behind him the elder Jondrette girl, who was following him. This girl was odious to his sight ; it was she who had his five francs, it was too late to ask her for them, the cab was there no longer, the fiacre was far away. Moreover, she would not give them back to him. As to questioning her about the address of the people who had just come, that was useless ; it was plain that she did not know, since the letter signed Fabantou was addressed to *the beneficent gentleman of the Church Saint Jacques du Haut Pas.*

Marius went into his room and pushed to his door behind him.

It did not close ; he turned and saw a hand holding the door partly open.

"What is it ?" he asked ; "who is there ?"

It was the Jondrette girl.

"Is it you ?" said Marius, almost harshly, "you again ? What do you want with me ?"

She seemed thoughtful and did not look at him. She had lost the assurance which she had had in the morning. She did not come in, but stopped in the dusky hall, where Marius perceived her through the half-open door.

"Come now, will you answer ?" said Marius. "What is it you want of me ?"

She raised her mournful eyes, in which a sort of confused light seemed to shine dimly, and said to him,—

"Monsieur Marius, you look sad. What is the matter with you ?"

"With me ?"

"Yes, you."

"There is nothing the matter with me."

"Yes !"

"No."

"I tell you there is !"

"Let me be quiet !"

Marius pushed the door anew—she still held it back.

"Stop," said she, "you are wrong. Though you may not be rich, you were good this morning. Be so again now. You gave me something to eat, tell me now what ails you. You are troubled at something, that is plain. I do not want you to be troubled. What must be done for that? Can I serve you in anything? Let me. I do not ask your secrets, you need not tell them to me, but yet I may be useful. I can certainly help you, since I help my father. When it is necessary to carry letters, go into houses, inquire from door to door, find out an address, follow somebody, I do it. Now, you can certainly tell me what is the matter with you, I will go and speak to the persons; sometimes for somebody to speak to the persons is enough to understand things, and it is all arranged. Make use of me."

An idea came into Marius's mind. What straw do we despise when we feel that we are sinking.

He approached the girl.

"Listen," said he to her kindly.

She interrupted him with a flash of joy in her eyes.

"Oh! yes, talk softly to me! I like that better."

"Well," resumed he, "you brought this old gentleman here with his daughter."

"Yes."

"Do you know their address?"

"No."

"Find it for me."

The girl's eyes, which had been gloomy, had become joyful; they now became dark.

"Is that what you want?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Do you know them?"

"No."

"That is to say," said she hastily, "you do not know her, but you want to know her."

This *them* which had become *her* had an indescribable significance and bitterness.

"Well, can you do it?" said Marius.

"You shall have the beautiful young lady's address."

There was again, in these words, "the beautiful young lady," an expression which made Marius uneasy. He continued,—

"Well, no matter! the address of the father and daughter. Their address, yes!"

She looked steadily at him.

"What will you give me?"

"Anything you wish!"

"Anything I wish?"

"Yes."

"You shall have the address."

She looked down, and then with a hasty movement closed the door.

Marius was alone.

He dropped into a chair, with his head and both elbows on the bed, swallowed up in thoughts which he could not grasp, and as if he were in a fit of vertigo. All that had taken place since morning, the appearance of the angel, her disappearance, what this poor creature had just said to him, a gleam of hope floating in an ocean of despair—all this was confusedly crowding his brain.

Suddenly he was violently awakened from his reverie.

He heard the loud, harsh voice of Jondrette pronounce these words, for him full of the strangest interest,—

"I tell you that I am sure of it, and that I recognized him!"

Of whom was Jondrette talking? he had recognized whom? M. Leblanc? the father of "his Ursula?" What! did Jondrette know him? was Marius just about to get in this sudden and unexpected way all the information the lack of which made his life obscure to himself? was he at

last to know whom he loved,—who this young girl was? who her father was? was the thick shadow which enveloped them to be rolled away? was the veil to be rent? Oh, heavens!

He sprang, rather than mounted, upon the bureau, and resumed his place near the little aperture in the partition.

He again saw the interior of the Jondrette den.

XII.

NOTHING had changed in the appearance of the family, except that the wife and daughters had opened the package, and put on the woollen stockings and underclothes. Two new coverlids were thrown over the two beds.

Jondrette had evidently just come in. He had not yet recovered his regular breathing. His daughters were sitting on the floor near the fireplace, the elder binding up the hand of the younger. His wife lay as if exhausted upon the pallet near the fireplace, with an astonished countenance. Jondrette was walking up and down the garret with rapid strides. His eyes had an extraordinary look.

The woman, who seemed timid and stricken with stupor before her husband, ventured to say to him,—

“What, really? you are sure?”

“Sure! It was eight years ago! but I recognize him! Ah! I recognize him! I recognized him immediately. What! it did not strike you?”

“No.”

“And yet I told you to pay attention. But it is the same height, the same face, hardly any older; there are some men who do not grow old; I don’t know how they do it; it is the same tone of voice. He is better dressed,

that is all! Ah! mysterious old devil, I have got you, all right!"

He checked himself, and said to his daughters:

"You go out! It is queer that it did not strike your eye."

They got up to obey.

The mother stammered out,—

"With her sore hand?"

"The air will do her good," said Jondrette. "Go along."

It was clear that this man was one of those to whom there is no reply. The two girls went out.

Just as they were passing the door, the father caught the elder by the arm, and said with a peculiar tone,—

"You will be here at five o'clock precisely. Both of you. I shall need you."

Marius redoubled his attention.

Alone with his wife, Jondrette began to walk the room again, and took two or three turns in his silence. Then he spent a few minutes in tucking the bottom of the woman's chemise which he wore, into the waist of his trousers.

Suddenly he turned towards the woman, folded his arms, and exclaimed,—

"And do you want I should tell you one thing? the young lady——"

"Well, what?" said the woman, "the young lady?"

Marius could doubt no longer, it was indeed of her that they were talking. He listened with an intense anxiety. His whole life was concentrated in his ears.

But Jondrette stooped down, and whispered to his wife. Then he straightened up and finished aloud,—

"It is she!"

"That girl?" said the wife.

"That girl!" said the husband.

No words could express what there was in the *that girl* of the mother. It was surprise, rage, hatred, anger, mingled and combined in a monstrous intonation. The few words that had been spoken—some name, doubtless, which her husband had whispered in her ear—had been enough to rouse this huge drowsy woman and to change her repulsiveness to hideousness.

"Impossible!" she exclaimed, "when I think that my daughters go barefoot and have not a dress to put on! What! a satin pelisse, a velvet hat, buskins, and all! more than two hundred francs worth! one would think she was a lady! no, you are mistaken! why, in the first place, she was horrid, this one is not bad! she is really not bad! it cannot be she!"

"I tell you it is she. You will see."

At this absolute affirmation, the woman raised her big red and blond face and looked at the ceiling with a hideous expression. At that moment she appeared to Marius still more terrible than her husband. She was a swine with the look of a tigress.

"What!" she resumed, "this horrible beautiful young lady who looked at my girls with an appearance of pity, can she be that beggar! Oh, I would like to stamp her heart out!"

She sprang off the bed, and remained a moment standing, her hair flying, her nostrils distended, her mouth half open, her fists clenched and drawn back. Then she fell back upon the pallet. The man still walked back and forth, paying no attention to his female.

After a few moments of silence he approached her and stopped before her, with folded arms, as before.

"And do you want I should tell you one thing?"

"What?" she asked.

He answered in a quick and low voice,—

“My fortune is made.”

The woman stared at him with that look which means,
“Has the man who is talking to me gone crazy?”

He continued,—

“Thunder! it is a good long time now that I have been a parishioner of the die-of-hunger-if-you-have-any-fire,-and-die-of-cold-if-you-have-any-bread parish! I have had misery enough! my yoke and the yoke of other people! I jest no longer, I find it comic no longer, enough of puns, good God! No more farces, Father Eternal! I want food for my hunger, I want drink for my thirst! to stuff! to sleep! to do nothing! I want to have my turn, I do! before I burst! I want to be a bit of a millionaire!”

He took a turn about the garret and added,—

“Like other people.”

“What do you mean?” asked the woman.

He shook his head, winked and lifted his voice like a street doctor about to make a demonstration,—

“What do I mean? listen!”

“Hist!” muttered the woman, “not so loud! if it means business nobody must hear.”

“Pshaw! who is there to hear? our neighbour? I saw him go out just now. Besides, does he hear, the great stupid? and then I tell you that I saw him go out.”

Nevertheless, by a sort of instinct, Jondrette lowered his voice, not enough, however, for his words to escape Marius. A favourable circumstance, and one which enabled Marius to lose nothing of this conversation, was that the fallen snow deafened the sound of the carriages on the boulevard.

Marius heard this,—

“Listen attentively. He is caught, the Crœsus! it is all right. It is already done. Everything is arranged. I have seen the men. He will come this evening at six o’clock. To bring his sixty francs, the rascal! did you see how I got that out, my sixty francs, my landlord, my 4th of February!

it is not even a quarter? was that stupid! He will come, then, at six o'clock! our neighbour is gone to dinner then. Mother Bougon is washing dishes in the city. There is nobody in the house. Our neighbour never comes back before eleven o'clock. The girls will stand watch. You shall help us. He will be his own executor."

"And if he should not be his own executor?" asked the wife.

Jondrette made a sinister gesture and said,—

"We will execute him."

And he burst into a laugh.

It was the first time that Marius had seen him laugh. This laugh was cold and feeble, and made him shudder.

Jondrette opened a closet near the chimney, took out an old cap and put it on his head after brushing it with his sleeve.

"Now," said he, "I am going out. I have still some men to see. Some good ones. You will see how it is going to work. I shall be back as soon as possible, it is a great hand to play, look out for the house."

And with his two fists in the two pockets of his trousers, he stood a moment in thought, then exclaimed,—

"Do you know that it is very lucky indeed that he did not recognize me? If he had been the one to recognize me he would not have come back. He would escape us! It is my beard that saved me! my romantic beard! my pretty little romantic beard!"

And he began to laugh again.

He went to the window. The snow was still falling, and blotted out the grey sky.

"What villanous weather!" said he.

Then folding his coat,—

"The skin is too large. It is all the same," added he, "he did devilish well to leave it for me, the old scoundrel!"

Without this I should not have been able to go out, and the whole thing would have been spoiled! But on what do things hang!"

And pulling his cap over his eyes, he went out.

Hardly had he had time to take a few steps in the hall, when the door opened, and his tawny and cunning face again appeared.

"I forgot," said he. "You will have a charcoal fire."

And he threw into his wife's apron the five-franc piece which the "philanthropist" had left him.

"A charcoal fire?" asked the woman.

"Yes."

"How many bushels?"

"Two good ones."

"That will be thirty sous. With the rest I will buy something for dinner."

"The devil! no."

"Why?"

"The piece of a hundred sous is not to be spent."

"Why?"

"Because I shall have something to buy."

"What?"

"Something."

"How much will you need?"

"Where is there a tool store near here?"

"Rue Mouffetard."

"Oh yes, at the corner of some street; I see the shop."

"But tell me how much you will need for what you have to buy?"

"Fifty sous or three francs."

"There won't be much left for dinner."

"Don't bother about eating to-day. There is better business."

"That is enough, my jewel."

At this word from his wife, Jondrette closed the door,

and Marius heard his steps recede along the hall and go rapidly down the stairs.

Just then the clock of St. Médard struck one.

XIII.

MARIUS, dreamer as he was, was, as we have said, of a firm and energetic nature. His habits of solitary meditation, while developing sympathy and compassion in him, had perhaps diminished his liability to become irritated, but left intact the faculty of indignation; he had the benevolence of a brahmin and the severity of a judge; he would have pitied a toad, but he would have crushed a viper. Now, it was into a viper's hole that he had just been looking; it was a nest of monsters that he had before his eyes.

"I must put my foot on these wretches," said he.

None of the enigmas which he hoped to see unriddled were yet cleared up; on the contrary, all had perhaps become still darker; he knew nothing more of the beautiful child of the Luxembourg or of the man whom he called M. Leblanc, except that Jondrette knew them. Across the dark words which had been uttered, he saw distinctly but one thing, that an ambushade was preparing, an ambushade obscure, but terrible; that they were both running a great risk, she probably, her father certainly; that he must foil the hideous combinations of the Jondrettes and break the web of these spiders.

He looked for a moment at the female Jondrette. She had pulled an old sheet-iron furnace out of a corner, and she was fumbling among the old iron.

He got down from the bureau as quietly as he could, taking care to make no noise.

In the midst of his dread at what was in preparation,

and the horror with which the Jondrettes had inspired him, he felt a sort of joy at the idea that it would perhaps be given to him to render so great a service to her whom he loved.

But what was he to do? warn the persons threatened? where should he find them? He did not know their address. They had reappeared to his eyes for an instant, then they had again plunged into the boundless depths of Paris. Wait at the door for M. Leblanc at six o'clock in the evening, the time when he would arrive, and warn him of the plot? But Jondrette and his men would see him watching, the place was solitary, they would be stronger than he, they would find means to seize him or get him out of the way, and he whom Marius wished to save would be lost. One o'clock had just struck, the ambuscade was to be carried out at six. Marius had five hours before him.

There was but one thing to be done.

He put on his presentable coat, tied a cravat about his neck, took his hat, and went out, without making any more noise than if he had been walking barefooted upon moss.

Besides, the Jondrette woman was still fumbling over her old iron.

Once out of the house, he went to the Rue du Petit Banquier.

He was about midway of that street, near a very low wall which he could have stepped over in some places, and which bordered a broad field, he was walking slowly, absorbed in his thoughts as he was, and the snow deafened his steps; all at once he heard voices talking very near him. He turned his head, the street was empty, there was nobody in it, it was broad daylight, and yet he heard voices distinctly.

It occurred to him to look over this wall.

There were, in fact, two men there with their backs to the wall, seated in the snow, and talking in a low tone.

These two forms were unknown to him: one was a bearded

man in a blouse, and the other a long-haired man in tatters. The bearded man had on a Greek cap, the other was bare-headed, and there was snow in his hair.

By bending his head over above them, Marius could hear.

The long-haired one jogged the other with his elbow, and said,—

“With Patron-Minette, it can’t fail.”

“Do you think so?” said the bearded one; and the long-haired one replied,—

“It will be a *fafiot* of five hundred *balles* for each of us, and the worst that can happen—five years, six years, ten years at most!”

The other answered hesitatingly, shivering under his Greek cap,—

“Yes, it is a real thing. We can’t go against such things.”

“I tell you that the affair can’t fail,” replied the long-haired one. “Father What’s-his-name’s *maringotte* will be harnessed.”

Then they began to talk about a melodrama which they had seen the evening before at La Gaîté.

Marius went on his way.

It seemed to him that the obscure words of these men, so strangely hidden behind that wall, and crouching down in the snow, were not perhaps without some connection with Jondrette’s terrible projects. That must be *the affair*.

He went towards the Faubourg Saint Marceau, and asked at the first shop in his way where he could find a commissary of police.

Number 14, Rue de Pontoise, was pointed out to him.

Marius went thither.

Passing a baker’s shop, he bought a two-sou loaf and ate it, foreseeing that he would have no dinner.

On his way he rendered to Providence its due. He

thought that if he had not given his five francs to the Jondrette girl in the morning, he would have followed M. Leblanc's fiacre, and consequently known nothing of this, so that there would have been no obstacle to the ambuscade of the Jondrettes, and M. Leblanc would have been lost, and doubtless his daughter with him.

XIV.

ON reaching Number 14, Rue de Pontoise, he went upstairs and asked for the commissary of police.

"The commissary of police is not in," said one of the office boys; "but there is an inspector who answers for him. Would you like to speak to him? is it urgent?"

"Yes," said Marius.

The office boy introduced him into the commissary's private room. A man of tall stature was standing there behind a railing, in front of a stove, and holding up with both hands the flaps of a huge overcoat with three capes. He had a square face, a thin and firm mouth, very fierce, bushy, greyish whiskers, and an eye that would turn your pockets inside out. You might have said of this eye, not that it penetrated, but that it ransacked.

This man's appearance was not much less ferocious or formidable than Jondrette's; it is sometimes no less startling to meet the dog than the wolf.

"What do you wish?" said he to Marius, without adding Monsieur.

"The commissary of police?"

"He is absent. I answer for him."

"It is a very secret affair."

"Speak, then."

"And very urgent."

"Then speak quickly."

This man, calm and abrupt, was at the same time alarming and reassuring. He inspired fear and confidence. Marius related his adventure. That a person whom he only knew by sight was to be drawn into an ambushade that very evening; that, occupying the room next the place, he, Marius Pontmercy, attorney, had heard the whole plot through the partition; that the scoundrel who had contrived the plot was named Jondrette; that he had accomplices, probably prowlers of the barrières, among others a certain Panchaud, alias Printanier, alias Bigrenaille; that Jondrette's daughters would stand watch; that there was no means of warning the threatened man, as not even his name was known; and, finally, that all this was to be done at six o'clock that evening, at the most desolate spot on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, in the house numbered 50-52.

At that number the inspector raised his head, and said coolly,—

"It is, then, in the room at the end of the hall?"

"Exactly," said Marius; and he added, "do you know that house?"

The inspector remained silent a moment, then answered, warming the heel of his boot at the door of the stove,—

"It seems so."

He continued between his teeth, speaking less to Marius than to his cravat,—

"There ought to be a dash of Patron-Minette in this."

That word struck Marius.

"Patron-Minette," said he. "Indeed, I heard that word pronounced."

And he related to the inspector the dialogue between

the long-haired man and the bearded man in the snow behind the wall on the Rue du Petit Banquier.

The inspector muttered,—

“The long-haired one must be Brujon, and the bearded one must be Demi-Liard, alias Deux-Milliards.”

He had dropped his eyes again, and was considering.

“As to the Father What’s-his-name, I have a suspicion of who he is. There, I have burnt my coat. They always make too much fire in these cursed stoves. Number 50-52. Old Gorbeau property.”

Then he looked at Marius.

“You have seen only this bearded man and this long-haired man?”

“And Panchaud.”

“You did not see a sort of little devilish rat prowling about there?”

“No.”

“Nor a great, big, clumsy heap, like the elephant in the Jardin des Plantes?”

“No.”

“Nor a villain who has the appearance of an old red cue?”

“No.”

“As to the fourth, nobody sees him, not even his helpers, clerks, and agents. It is not very surprising that you did not see him.”

“No. What are all these beings?” inquired Marius.

The inspector answered,—

“And then it is not their hour.”

He relapsed into silence, then resumed,—

“No. 50-52. I know the place. Impossible to hide ourselves in the interior without the artists perceiving us, then they would leave and break up the play. They are so modest! the public annoys them. None of that, none of that. I want to hear them sing, and make them dance.”

This monologue finished, he turned towards Marius and asked him, looking steadily at him,—

“Will you be afraid?”

“Of what?” said Marius.

“Of these men?”

“No more than of you!” replied Marius, rudely, who began to notice that this police spy had not yet called him Monsieur.

The inspector looked at Marius still more steadily, and continued with a sententious solemnity,—

“You speak now like a brave man and an honest man. Courage does not fear crime, and honesty does not fear authority.”

Marius interrupted him,—

“That is well enough; but what are you going to do?”

The inspector merely answered,—

“The lodgers in that house have latch-keys to get in with at night. You must have one.”

“Yes,” said Marius.

“Have you it with you?”

“Yes.”

“Give it to me,” said the inspector.

Marius took his key from his waistcoat, and handed it to the inspector, and added,—

“If you trust me, you will come in force.”

The inspector threw a glance upon Marius such as Voltaire would have thrown upon a provincial academician who had proposed a rhyme to him; with a single movement he plunged both his hands, which were enormous, into the two immense pockets of his overcoat, and took out two small steel pistols, of the kind called fisticuffs. He presented them to Marius, saying hastily and abruptly,—

“Take these. Go back home. Hide yourself in your

room ; let them think you have gone out. **They** are loaded. Each with two balls. You **will** watch ; **there** is a hole in the wall, as you have told me. The men **will** come. Let them go on a little. When you deem the affair at a point, and when it is time to stop it, you will fire off a pistol. Not too soon. The rest is my affair. A pistol-shot in the air, into the ceiling, no matter where. Above all, not too soon. Wait till the consummation is commenced ; you are a lawyer, you know what that is."

Marius took the pistols and put them in the side pocket of his coat.

"They make a bunch that way ; they show," said the inspector. "Put them in your fobs rather."

Marius hid the pistols in his fobs.

"Now," pursued the inspector, "there is not a minute to be lost by anybody. What time is it ? Half-past two. It is at seven ?"

"Six o'clock," said Marius.

"I have time enough," continued the inspector, "but I have only enough. Forget nothing of what I have told you. Bang ! A pistol-shot."

"Be assured," said Marius.

And as Marius placed his hand on the latch of the door to go out, the inspector called to him,—

"By the way, if you need me between now and then, come or send here. You will ask for Inspector Javert."

XV.

A FEW moments afterwards, towards three o'clock, Courfeyrac happened to pass along the Rue Mouffetard in company with Bossuet. The snow was falling still faster.

and filled the air. Bossuet was just saying to Courfeyrac,—

“To see all these snow-flakes falling, one would say that there is a swarm of white butterflies in the sky.” All at once Bossuet perceived Marius, who was going up the street towards the *barrière* with a very peculiar appearance.

“Hold on, Marius,” said Bossuet.

“I saw him,” said Courfeyrac. “Don’t speak to him.”

“Why?”

“He is busy.”

“At what?”

“Don’t you see how he looks?”

“What look?”

“He has the appearance of a man who is following somebody.”

“That is true,” said Bossuet.

“And see what eyes he is making!” added Courfeyrac.

“But who the devil is he following?”

“Some deary-sweety-flowery-bonnet! he is in love!”

“But,” observed Bossuet, “I do not see any deary, nor any sweety, nor any flowery bonnet in the street. There is no woman.”

Courfeyrac looked, and exclaimed,—

“He is following a man!”

In fact a man, with a cap on his head, and whose grey beard they distinguished although only his back could be seen, was walking some twenty paces in advance of Marius.

This man was dressed in a new overcoat, which was too large for him, and a horrid pair of pantaloons in tatters and black with mud.

Bossuet burst out laughing.

"Who is that man?"

"He?" replied Courfeyrac, "he is a poet. Poets are fond of wearing the trousers of a rabbit-skin pedlar, and the coat of a peer of France."

"Let us see where Marius is going," said Bossuet, "let us see where this man is going; let us follow them, eh?"

"Bossuet!" exclaimed Courfeyrac, "Eagle of Meaux! you are a prodigious fool. Follow a man who is following a man!"

They went on their way.

Marius had, in fact, seen Jondrette passing along the Rue Mouffetard, and was watching him.

Jondrette went straight on without suspecting that there was now an eye fixed upon him.

He left the Rue Mouffetard, and Marius saw him go into one of the most wretched places on the Rue Gracieuse; he stayed there about a quarter of an hour, and then returned to the Rue Mouffetard. He stopped at a hardware store, which there was in those times at the corner of the Rue Pierre Lombard, and, a few minutes afterwards, Marius saw him come out of the shop, holding in his hand a large cold chisel with a white wooden handle, which he concealed under his coat. At the upper end of the Rue de Petit Gentilly, he turned to the left and walked rapidly to the Rue du Petit Banquier. Night was falling; the snow, which had ceased to fall for a moment, was beginning again; Marius hid just at the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier, which was solitary, as usual, and did not follow Jondrette further. It was fortunate that he did, for, on reaching the low wall where Marius had heard the long-haired man and the bearded man talking, Jondrette turned around, made sure that nobody was following him or saw him, then stepped over the wall, and disappeared.

The grounds which this wall bounded communicated

with the rear court of an old livery stable-keeper of bad repute, who had failed, but who had still a few old vehicles under his sheds.

Marius thought it best to take advantage of Jondrette's absence to get home; besides, it was getting late; every evening, Ma'am Bougon, on going out to wash her dishes in the city, was in the habit of closing the house door, which was always locked at dusk; Marius had given his key to the inspector of police; it was important, therefore, that he should make haste.

Evening had come; night had almost closed in; there was now but one spot in the horizon or in the whole sky which was lighted by the sun; that was the moon.

She was rising red behind the low dome of La Salpêtrière.

Marius returned to No. 50-52 with rapid strides. The door was still open when he arrived. He ascended the stairs on tiptoe, and glided along the wall of the hall as far as his room. This hall, it will be remembered, was lined on both sides by garrets, which were all that time empty and to let. Ma'am Bougon usually left the doors open. As he passed by one of these doors, Marius thought he perceived in the unoccupied cell four motionless heads, which were made dimly visible by a remnant of daylight falling through the little window. Marius, not wishing to be seen, did not endeavour to see. He succeeded in getting into his room without being perceived and without any noise. It was time. A moment afterwards, he heard Ma'am Bougon going out and closing the door of the house.

XVI.

MARIUS sat down on his bed. It might have been half-past five o'clock. A half-hour only separated him from what was

to come. He heard his arteries beat as one hears the ticking of a watch in the dark. He thought of this double march that was going on at that moment in the darkness, crime advancing on the one hand, justice coming on the other. He was not afraid, but he could not think without a sort of shudder of the things which were so soon to take place. To him, as to all those whom some surprising adventure has suddenly befallen, this whole day seemed but a dream; and, to assure himself that he was not the prey of a nightmare, he had to feel the chill of the two steel pistols in his fob-pockets.

It was not now snowing; the moon, growing brighter and brighter, was getting clear of the haze, and its light, mingled with the white reflection from the fallen snow, gave the room a twilight appearance.

There was a light in the Jondrette den. Marius saw the hole in the partition shine with a red gleam which appeared to him bloody.

He was sure that this gleam could hardly be produced by a candle. However, there was no movement in their room, nobody was stirring there, nobody spoke, not a breath, the stillness was icy and deep, and save for that light he could have believed that he was beside a sepulchre.

Marius took his boots off softly, and pushed them under his bed.

Some minutes passed. Marius heard the lower door turn on its hinges; a heavy and rapid step ascended the stairs and passed along the corridor, the latch of the garret was noisily lifted; Jondrette came in.

Several voices were heard immediately. The whole family was in the garret. Only they kept silence in the absence of the master, like the cubs in the absence of the wolf.

"It is me," said he.

"Good evening, *pèremuche*," squeaked the daughters.

"Well!" said the mother.

"All goes to a charm," answered Jondrette, "but my feet are as cold as a dog's. Good, that is right, you are dressed up. You must be able to inspire confidence."

"All ready to go out."

"You will forget nothing of what I told you! you will do the whole of it?"

"Rest assured about that."

"Because——," said Jondrette. And he did not finish his sentence.

Marius heard him put something heavy on the table, probably the chisel which he had bought.

"Ah, ha!" said Jondrette, "have you been eating here?"

"Yes," said the mother, "I have had three big potatoes and some salt. I took advantage of the fire to cook them."

"Well," replied Jondrette, "to-morrow I will take you to dine with me. There will be a duck and the accompaniments. You shall dine like Charles X.; everything is going well!"

Then he added, lowering his voice,—

"The mouse-trap is open. The cats are ready."

He lowered his voice still more, and said,—

"Put that into the fire."

Marius heard a sound of charcoal, as if somebody was striking it with pincers or some iron tool, and Jondrette continued,—

"Have you greased the hinges of the door, so that they shall not make any noise?"

"Yes," answered the mother

"What time is it?"

"Six o'clock, almost. The half has just struck on Saint Médard."

"The devil!" said Jondrette, "the girls must go and stand watch. Come here, you children, and listen to me."

There was a whispering.

Jondrette's voice rose again,—

"Has Bougon gone out?"

"Yes," said the mother.

"Are you sure there is nobody at home in our neighbour's room?"

"He has not been **back to-day**, and you know that it is his dinner-time."

"You are sure?"

"Sure."

"It is all the **same**," replied Jondrette; "there is no harm in going to see whether he is at home. Daughter, take the candle and go."

Marius dropped on his hands and knees, and crept noiselessly under the bed.

Hardly had he concealed himself, when he perceived a light through the cracks of his door.

"P'pa," cried a voice, "he has gone out."

He recognized the voice of the elder girl.

"Have you gone in?" asked the father.

"No," answered the girl, "but as his key is in his door, he has gone out."

The father cried,—

"Go in just the same."

The door opened, and Marius saw the tall girl come in with a candle. She had the same appearance as in the morning, except that she was still more horrible in this light.

She walked straight towards the bed. Marius had a moment of inexpressible anxiety, but there was a mirror nailed on the wall near the bed; it was to that she was going. She stretched up on tiptoe and looked at herself in it. A sound of old iron rattling was heard in the next room.

She smoothed her hair with the palm of her hand, and smiled at the mirror, singing the while in her broken sepulchral voice.

Meanwhile Marius was trembling. It seemed impossible to him that she should not hear his breathing.

She went to the window and looked out, speaking aloud in her half-crazy way.

"How ugly Paris is when he puts a white shirt on!" said she.

She returned to the mirror and renewed her grimaces, taking alternately front and three-quarter views of herself.

"Well," cried her father, "what are you doing now?"

"I am looking under the bed and the furniture," answered she, continuing to arrange her hair; "there is no body here."

"Booby!" howled the father. "Here immediately, and let us lose no time."

"I am coming! I am coming!" said she. "One has no time for anything in their shanty."

She hummed.

She cast a last glance at the mirror and went out, shutting the door after her.

A moment afterwards, Marius heard the sound of the bare feet of the two young girls in the passage, and the voice of Jondrette crying to them,—

"Pay attention, now! one towards the barrière, the other at the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier. Don't lose sight of the house door a minute, and if you see the least thing, here immediately! tumble along! You have a key to come in with."

The elder daughter muttered,—

"To stand sentry barefoot in the snow!"

"To-morrow you shall have boots of beetle colour silk!" said the father.

They went down the stairs, and, a few seconds afterwards, the sound of the lower door shutting announced that they had gone out.

There were now in the house only Marius and the Jondrettes, and probably also the mysterious beings of whom Marius had caught a glimpse in the twilight behind the door of the untenanted garret.

XVII.

MARIUS judged that the time had come to resume his place at his observatory. In a twinkling, and with the agility of his age, he was at the hole in the partition.

He looked in.

The interior of the Jondrette apartment presented a singular appearance, and Marius found the explanation of the strange light which he had noticed. A candle was burning in a verdigrised candlestick, but it was not that which really lighted the room. The entire den was, as it were, illuminated by the reflection of a large sheet-iron furnace in the fireplace, which was filled with lighted charcoal—the fire which the female Jondrette had made ready in the daytime. The charcoal was burning, and the furnace was red-hot; a blue flame danced over it, and helped to show the form of the chisel bought by Jondrette in the Rue Pierre Lombard, which was growing ruddy among the coals. In a corner near the door, and arranged as if for anticipated use, were two heaps, which appeared to be, one a heap of old iron, the other a heap of ropes. All this would have made one, who had known nothing of what was going forward, waver between a very sinister idea and a very simple idea. The room thus lighted up seemed rather a smithy than a mouth of hell; but Jondrette, in that glare, had rather the appearance of a demon than of a blacksmith.

The heat of the glowing coals was such that the candle

upon the table melted on the side towards the furnace and was burning fastest on that side. An old copper dark lantern, worthy of Diogenes turned Cartouche, stood upon the mantel.

The furnace, which was set into the fireplace, beside the almost extinguished embers, sent its smoke into the flue of the chimney and exhaled no odour.

The moon, shining through the four panes of the window, threw its whiteness into the ruddy and flaming garret; and to Marius's poetic mind—a dreamer even in the moment of action—it was like a thought from heaven mingled with the shapeless nightmares of earth.

A breath of air, coming through the broken square, helped to dissipate the charcoal odour and to conceal the furnace.

The Jondrette lair was, if the reader remembers what we have said of the Gorbeau house, admirably chosen for the theatre of a deed of darkness and violence, and for the concealment of a crime. It was the most retired room of the most isolated house of the most solitary boulevard in Paris. If ambuscade had not existed, it would have been invented there.

The whole depth of a house and a multitude of untenanted rooms separated this hole from the boulevard, and its only window opened upon waste fields inclosed with walls and palisade fences.

Jondrette had lighted his pipe, sat down on the dismantled chair, and was smoking. His wife was speaking to him in a low tone.

If Marius had been Courfeyrac, that is to say one of those men who laugh at every opportunity in life, he would have burst with laughter when his eye fell upon this woman. She had on a black hat with plumes somewhat similar to the hats of the heralds-at-arms at the consecration of Charles X., an immense tartan shawl over her knit skirt, and the man's shoes which her daughter had disdained in

the morning. It was this toilet which had drawn from Jondrette the exclamation, "*Good ! you are dressed up ! you have done well ! You must be able to inspire confidence !*"

As to Jondrette, he had not taken off the new surtout, too large for him, which M. Leblanc had given him, and his costume continued to offer that contrast between the coat and pantaloons which constituted in Courfeyrac's eyes the ideal of a poet.

Suddenly Jondrette raised his voice :

"By the way, now, I think of it ! In such weather as this he will come in a fiacre. Light the lantern, take it, and go down. You will stay there behind the lower door. The moment you hear the carriage stop, you will open immediately, he will come up, you will light him up the stairs and above the hall, and when he comes in here, you will go down again immediately, pay the driver, and send the fiacre away."

"And the money ?" asked the woman.

Jondrette fumbled in his trousers, and handed her five francs.

"What is that ?" she exclaimed.

Jondrette answered with dignity,—

"It is the monarch which our neighbour gave this morning."

And he added,—

"Do you know, we must have two chairs here ?"

"What for ?"

"To sit in."

Marius felt a shiver run down his back on hearing the woman make this quiet reply,—

"Pardieu ! I will get our neighbour's."

And with rapid movement she opened the door of the den, and went out into the hall.

Marius physically had not the time to get down from the bureau, and go and hide himself under the bed.

"Take the candle," cried Jondrette.

"No," said she, "that would bother me; I have two chairs to bring. It is moonlight."

Marius heard the heavy hand of Mother Jondrette groping after his key in the dark. The door opened. He stood nailed to his place by apprehension and stupor.

The woman came in.

The gable window let in a ray of moonlight, between two great sheets of shadow. One of these sheets of shadow entirely covered the wall against which Marius was leaning, so as to conceal him.

The mother Jondrette raised her eyes, did not see Marius, took the two chairs, the only chairs which Marius had, and went out, slamming the door noisily behind her.

She went back into the den.

"Here are the two chairs."

"And here is the lantern," said the husband. "Go down quick."

She hastily obeyed, and Jondrette was left alone.

He arranged the two chairs on the two sides of the table, turned the chisel over in the fire, put an old screen in front of the fireplace, which concealed the furnace, then went to the corner where the heap of ropes was, and stooped down, as if to examine something. Marius then perceived that what he had taken for a shapeless heap was a rope ladder, very well made, with wooden rounds, and two large hooks to hang it by.

This ladder and a few big tools, actual masses of iron, which were thrown upon the pile of old iron heaped up behind the door, were not in the Jondrette den in the morning, and had evidently been brought there in the afternoon, during Marius's absence.

"Those are smith's tools," thought Marius.

Had Marius been a little better informed in this line, he would have recognized, in what he took for smith's tools.

certain instruments capable of picking a lock or forcing a door, and others capable of cutting or hacking,—the two families of sinister tools, which thieves call *cadets* and *fauchants*.

The fireplace and the table, with the two chairs, were exactly opposite Marius. The furnace was hidden; the room was now lighted only by the candle; the least thing upon the table or the mantel made a great shadow. A broken water-pitcher masked the half of one wall. There was in the room a calm which was inexpressibly hideous and threatening. The approach of some appalling thing could be felt.

Jondrette had let his pipe go out—a sure sign that he was intensely absorbed—and had come back and sat down. The candle made the savage ends and corners of his face stand out prominently. There were contractions of his brows, and abrupt openings of his right hand, as if he were replying to the last counsels of a dark interior monologue. In one of these obscure replies which he was making to himself, he drew the table drawer out quickly towards him, took out a long carving knife which was hidden there, and tried its edge on his nail. This done, he put the knife back into the drawer, and shut it.

Marius, for his part, grasped the pistol which was in his right fob-pocket, took it out, and cocked it.

The pistol in cocking gave a little clear, sharp sound.

Jondrette started, and half rose from his chair.

“Who is there?” cried he.

Marius held his breath; Jondrette listened a moment, then began to laugh, saying,—

“What a fool I am? It is the partition cracking.”

Marius kept the pistol in his hand.

XVIII.

Just then the distant and melancholy vibration of a bell shook the windows. Six o'clock struck on Saint Médard.

Jondrette marked each stroke with a nod of his head. At the sixth stroke, he snuffed the candle with his fingers.

Then he began to walk about the room, listened in the hall, walked, listened again: "Provided he comes!" muttered he; then he returned to his chair.

He had hardly sat down when the door opened.

The mother Jondrette had opened it, and stood in the hall making a horrible, amiable grimace, which was lighted up from beneath by one of the holes of the dark lantern.

"Walk in," said she.

"Walk in, my benefactor," repeated Jondrette, rising precipitately.

Monsieur Leblanc appeared.

He had an air of serenity which made him singularly venerable.

He laid four louis upon the table.

"Monsieur Fabantou," said he, "that is for your rent and your pressing wants. We will see about the rest."

"God reward you, my generous benefactor!" said Jondrette, and rapidly approaching his wife,—

"Send away the fiacre!"

She slipped away while her husband was lavishing bows and offering a chair to Monsieur Leblanc. A moment afterwards she came back and whispered in his ear,—

"It is done."

The snow, which had been falling ever since morning was so deep that they had not heard the fiacre arrive, and did not hear it go away.

Meanwhile Monsieur Leblanc had taken a seat.

Jondrette had taken possession of the other chair opposite Monsieur Leblanc.

Now, to form an idea of the scene which follows, let the reader call to mind the chilly night, the solitudes of La Salpêtrière covered with snow, and white in the moonlight, like immense shrouds, the flickering light of the street lamps here and there reddening these tragic boulevards and the long rows of black elms, not a passer perhaps within a mile around, the Gorbeau tenement at its deepest degree of silence, horror, and night, in that tenement, in the midst of these solitudes, in the midst of this darkness, the vast Jondrette garret lighted by a candle, and in this den two men seated at a table, Monsieur Leblanc tranquil, Jondrette smiling and terrible, his wife the wolf dam, in a corner, and, behind the partition, Marius, invisible, alert, losing no word, losing no movement, his eye on the watch, the pistol in his grasp.

Marius, moreover, was experiencing nothing but an emotion of horror—no fear. He clasped the butt of the pistol, and felt reassured. “I shall stop this wretch when I please,” thought he.

He felt that the police was somewhere near by in ambush, awaiting the signal agreed upon, and all ready to stretch out its arm.

He hoped, moreover, that from this terrible meeting between Jondrette and Monsieur Leblanc some light would be thrown upon all that he was interested to know.

XIX.

No sooner was Monsieur Leblanc seated than he turned his eyes towards the empty pallets.

“How does the poor little injured girl do?” he inquired.

"Badly," answered Jondrette with a doleful yet grateful smile, "very badly, my worthy monsieur. Her elder sister has taken her to the Bourbe to have her arm dressed. You will see them, they will be back directly."

"Madame Fabantou appears to me much better?" resumed Monsieur Leblanc, casting his eyes upon the grotesque accoutrement of the female Jondrette, who, standing between him and the door, as if she were already guarding the exit, was looking at him in a threatening and almost a defiant posture.

"She is dying," said Jondrette. "But you see, monsieur! she has so much courage, that woman! She is not a woman, she is an ox."

The woman, touched by the compliment, retorted with the smirk of a flattered monster,—

"You are always too kind to me, Monsieur Jondrette."

"Jondrette!" said M. Leblanc, "I thought that your name was Fabantou?"

"Fabantou or Jondrette!" replied the husband, hastily. "Sobriquet as an artist!"

And, directing a shrug of the shoulders towards his wife, which M. Leblanc did not see, he continued with an emphatic and caressing tone of voice,—

"Ah! how well we have always got along together, this poor dear and I! What would be left to us, if it were not for that? We are so unfortunate, my respected monsieur! We have arms, no labour! We have courage, no work! I do not know how the Government arranges it, but, upon my word of honour, I am no Jacobin, monsieur, I am no brawler, I wish them no harm, but if I were the Ministers, upon my most sacred word, it would go differently. Now, for example, I wanted to have my girls learn the trade of making card-boxes. You will say, 'What' a trade?' Yes! a trade! a simple trade! a

living! What a fall, my benefactor! What a degradation, when one has been what we were! Alas! we have nothing left from our days of prosperity! Nothing but one single thing, a painting, to which I cling, but yet which I shall have to part with, for we must live! item, we must live!"

While Jondrette was talking, with an apparent disorder which detracted nothing from the crafty and cunning expression of his physiognomy, Marius raised his eyes, and perceived at the back of the room somebody whom he had not before seen. A man had come in so noiselessly that nobody had heard the door turn on its hinges. This man had a knit woollen waistcoat of violet colour, old, worn-out, stained, cut, and showing gaps at all its folds, full trousers of cotton velvet, socks on his feet, no shirt, his neck bare, his arms bare and tattooed, and his face stained black. He sat down in silence and with folded arms on the nearest bed, and as he kept behind the woman, he was distinguished only with difficulty.

That kind of magnetic instinct which warns the eve made M. Leblanc turn almost at the same time with Marius. He could not help a movement of surprise, which did not escape Jondrette,—

"Ah! I see!" exclaimed Jondrette, buttoning up his coat with a complacent air, "you are looking at your overcoat. It's a fit! my faith, it's a fit!"

"Who is that man?" said M. Leblanc.

"That man?" said Jondrette, "that is a neighbour. Pay no attention to him."

The neighbour had a singular appearance. However, factories of chemical products abound in the Faubourg Saint Marceau. Many machinists might have their faces blacked. The whole person of M. Leblanc, moreover, breathed a candid and intrepid confidence. He resumed,—

"Pardon me ; what were you saying to me, Monsieur Fabantou ?"

"I was telling you, monsieur and dear patron," replied Jondrette, leaning his elbows on the table, and gazing at M. Leblanc with fixed and tender eyes, similar to the eyes of a boa constrictor, "I was telling you that I had a picture to sell."

A slight noise was made at the door. A second man entered, and sat down on the bed, behind the female Jondrette. He had his arms bare, like the first, and a mask of ink or of soot.

Although this man had, literally, slipped into the room, she could not prevent M. Leblanc from perceiving him.

"Do not mind them," said Jondrette. "They are people of the house. I was telling you, then, that I have a valuable painting left. Here, monsieur, look."

He got up, went to the wall, at the foot of which stood the panel of which we have spoken, and turned it round, still leaving it resting against the wall. It was something in fact, that resembled a picture, and which the candle scarcely revealed. Marius could make nothing out of it, Jondrette being between him and the picture ; he merely caught a glimpse of a coarse daub, with a sort of principal personage, coloured in the crude and glaring style of strolling panoramas and paintings upon screens.

"What is that ?" asked M. Leblanc.

Jondrette exclaimed,—

"A painting by a master ; a picture of great price, my benefactor ! I cling to it as to my two daughters ; it calls up memories to me ! but I have told you, and I cannot unsay it, I am so unfortunate that I would part with it."

Whether by chance, or whether there was some beginning of distrust, while examining the picture, M. Leblanc glanced towards the back of the room. There were now four men there, three seated on the bed, one standing near the door—

casing ; all four bare-armed, motionless, and with blackened faces. One of those who were on the bed was leaning against the wall, with his eyes closed, and one would have said he was asleep. This one was old ; his white hair over his black face was horrible. The two others appeared young ; one was bearded, the other had long hair. None of them had shoes on ; those who did not have socks were barefooted.

Jondrette noticed that M. Leblanc's eye was fixed upon these men.

"They are friends. They live near by," said he. "They are dark because they work in charcoal. They are chimney-doctors. Do not occupy your mind with them, my benefactor, but buy my picture. Take pity on my misery. I shall not sell it to you at a high price. How much do you estimate it worth ?"

"But," said M. Leblanc, looking Jondrette full in the face, and like a man who puts himself on his guard, "this is some tavern sign ; it is worth about three francs."

Jondrette answered calmly,—

"Have you your pocket-book here ? I will be satisfied with a thousand crowns."

M. Leblanc rose to his feet, placed his back to the wall, and ran his eye rapidly over the room. He had Jondrette at his left on the side towards the window, and his wife and the four men at his right on the side towards the door. The four men did not stir, and had not even the appearance of seeing him ; Jondrette had begun again to talk in a plaintive key, with his eye so wild and his tones so mournful, that M. Leblanc might have thought that he had before his eyes nothing more nor less than a man gone crazy from misery.

"If you do not buy my picture, dear benefactor," said Jondrette, "I am without resources, I have only to throw myself into the river. When I think that I wanted to have my two girls learn to work on cardboard demi-fine, cardboard

work for gift-boxes. Well ! they must have a table with a board at the bottom so that the glasses shall not fall on the ground, they must have a furnace made on purpose, a pot with three compartments for the different degrees of strength which the paste must have according to whether it is used for wood, for paper, or for cloth, a knife to cut the paste-board, a gauge to adjust it, a hammer for the stamps, pincers,—the devil, how do I know what else?—and all this to earn four sous a day ! and work fourteen hours ! and every box passes through the girl's hands thirteen times ! and wetting the paper ! and to stain nothing ! and to keep the paste warm !—the devil ! I tell you ! four sous a day ! how do you think one can live ?”

While speaking, Jondrette did not look at M. Leblanc, who was watching him. M. Leblanc's eye was fixed upon Jondrette, and Jondrette's eye upon the door. Marius's breathless attention went from one to the other. M. Leblanc appeared to ask himself, “Is this an idiot ?” Jondrette repeated two or three times, with all sorts of varied inflections in the drawling and begging style, “I can only throw myself into the river ! I went down three steps for that the other day by the side of the bridge of Austerlitz !”

Suddenly his dull eye lighted up with a hideous glare ; this little man straightened up and became horrifying ; he took a step towards M. Leblanc, and cried to him in a voice of thunder,—

“But all that is not the question ! do you know me ?”

XX.

THE door of the garret had been suddenly flung open, disclosing three men in blue blouses with black paper masks. The first was spare, and had a long iron-bound

cudgel; the second, who was a sort of colossus, held by the middle of the handle, with the axe down, a butcher's pole-axe; the third, a broad-shouldered man, not so thin as the first, nor so heavy as the second, held in his clenched fist an enormous key, stolen from some prison door.

It appeared that it was the arrival of these men for which Jondrette was waiting. A rapid dialogue commenced between him and the man with the cudgel, the spare man.

"Is everything ready?" said Jondrette.

"Yes," answered the spare man.

"Where is Montparnasse, then?"

"The young primate stopped to chat with your daughter."

"Which one?"

"The elder."

"Is there a fiacre below?"

"Yes."

"The *maringotte* is ready?"

"Ready."

"With two good horses?"

"Excellent."

"It is waiting where I said it should wait?"

"Yes."

"Good," said Jondrette.

M. Leblanc was very pale. He looked over everything in the room about him like a man who understands into what he has fallen, and his head, directed in turn towards all the heads which surrounded him, moved on his neck with an attentive and astonished slowness, but there was nothing in his manner which resembled fear. He had made an extemporized intrenchment of the table; and this man, who the moment before had the appearance only of a good old man, had suddenly become a sort of athlete, and placed his powerful fist upon the back of his chair with a surprising and formidable gesture.

This old man, so firm and so brave before so great a

peril, seemed to be one of those natures who are courageous as they are good, simply and naturally. The father of a woman that we love is never a stranger to us. Marius felt proud of this unknown man.

Three of the men of whom Jondrette had said, they are *chimney-doctors*, had taken from the heap of old iron, one a large pair of shears, another a steelyard bar, the third a hammer, and placed themselves before the door without saying a word. The old man was still on the bed, and had merely opened his eyes. The woman Jondrette was sitting beside him.

Marius thought that in a few seconds more the time would come to interfere, and he raised his right hand towards the ceiling, in the direction of the hall, ready to let off his pistol-shot.

Jondrette, after his colloquy with the man who had the cudgel, turned again towards M. Leblanc and repeated his question, accompanying it with that low, smothered, and terrible laugh of his,—

“You do not recognize me, then?”

M. Leblanc looked him in the face, and answered,—

“No.”

Then Jondrette came up to the table. He leaned forward over the candle, folding his arms, and pushing his angular and ferocious jaws up towards the calm face of M. Leblanc, as nearly as he could without forcing him to draw back, and in that posture, like a wild beast just about to bite, he cried,—

“My name is not Fabantou, my name is not Jondrette, my name is Thénardier ! I am the innkeeper of Montfermeil ! do you understand me ? Thénardier ! now do you know me ?”

An imperceptible flush passed over M. Leblanc’s forehead, and he answered without a tremor or elevation of voice, and with his usual placidness,—

"No more than before."

Marius did not hear this answer. Could anybody have seen him at that moment in that darkness, he would have seen that he was haggard, astounded, and thunderstruck. When Jondrette had said, "*My name is Thénardier,*" Marius had trembled in every limb, and supported himself against the wall as if he had felt the chill of a sword-blade through his heart. Then his right arm, which was just ready to fire the signal-shot, dropped slowly down, and at the moment that Jondrette had repeated, "*Do you understand me, Thénardier?*" Marius's nerveless fingers had almost dropped the pistol. Jondrette, in unveiling who he was, had not moved M. Leblanc, but he had completely unnerved Marius. That name of Thénardier, which M. Leblanc did not seem to know, Marius knew. Remember what that name was to him! that name he had worn on his heart, written in his father's will! he carried it in the innermost place of his thoughts, in the holiest spot of his memory, in that sacred command—"A man named Thénardier saved my life. If my son should meet him, he will do him all the good he can." That name, we remember, was one of the devotions of his soul; he mingled it with the name of his father in his worship. What! here was Thénardier, here was that Thénardier, here was that innkeeper of Montfermeil, for whom he had so long and so vainly sought! He had found him at last, and how? this saviour of his father was a bandit! this man, to whom he, Marius, burned to devote himself, was a monster! this deliverer of Colonel Pontmercy was in the actual commission of a crime, the shape of which Marius did not yet see very distinctly, but which looked like an assassination! and upon whom, Great God! what a fatality! what a bitter mockery of Fate! His father from the depths of his coffin commanded him to do all the good he could to Thénardier; for four years Marius had had no other thought than to acquit this debt of his father, and the

moment that he was about to cause a brigand to be seized by justice, in the midst of a crime, Destiny called to him, "That is Thénardier !" His father's life, saved in a storm of grape upon the heroic field of Waterloo, he was at last about to reward this man for, and to reward him with the scaffold ! He had resolved, if ever he found this Thénardier, to accost him in no other wise than by throwing himself at his feet, and now he found him indeed, but to deliver him to the executioner ! his father said to him, "Aid Thénardier !" and he was answering that adored and holy voice by crushing Thénardier ! presenting as a spectacle to his father in his tomb the man who had snatched him from death at the peril of his life, executed in the Place St. Jaques by the act of his son—this Marius to whom he had bequeathed this man ! And what a mockery to have worn so long upon his breast the last wishes of his father, written by his hand, only to act so frightfully contrary to them ! but, on the other hand, to see this ambuscade and not prevent it ! to condemn the victim and spare the assassin ! could he be bound to any gratitude towards such a wretch ? All the ideas which Marius had had for the last four years were, as it were, pierced through and through by this unexpected blow. He shuddered. Everything depended upon him. He held in his hand, they all unconscious, those beings who were moving there before his eyes. If he fired the pistol, M. Leblanc was saved and Thénardier was lost ; if he did not, M. Leblanc was sacrificed, and, perhaps, Thénardier escaped. To hurl down the one, or to let the other fall ! remorse on either hand. What was to be done ? which should he choose ? be wanting to his most imperious memories, to so many deep resolutions, to his most sacred duty, to that most venerated paper ? be wanting to his father's will or suffer a crime to be accomplished ? He seemed on the one hand to hear "his Ursula" entreating him for her father, and on the other the Colonel

commending Thénardier to him. He felt that he was mad. His knees gave way beneath him; and he had not even time to deliberate, with such fury was the scene which he had before his eyes rushing forward. It was like a whirlwind which he had thought himself master of, and which was carrying him away. He was on the point of fainting.

Meanwhile Thénardier—we will call him by no other name henceforth—was walking to and fro before the table in a sort of bewilderment and frenzied triumph.

He clutched the candle and put it on the mantel with such a shock that the flame was almost extinguished, and the tallow was splattered upon the wall.

Then he turned towards M. Leblanc and, with a frightful look, spit out this,—

“Singed! smoked! basted! spitted!”

And he began to walk again, in full explosion.

“Ha!” cried he, “I have found you again at last, Monsieur Philanthropist! Monsieur Threadbare-millionaire! Monsieur Giver-of-dolls! old Marrow-bones! ha! you do not know me? no, it was not you who came to Montfermeil, to my inn, eight years ago, the night of Christmas, 1823! it was not you who took away Fantine’s child from my house! the Lark! it was not you who had a yellow coat! no! and a package of clothes in your hand, just as you came here this morning! say now, wife! it is his mania, it appears, to carry packages of woollen stockings into houses! old Benevolence, get out! Are you a hosier, Monsieur Millionaire? you give the poor your shop-sweepings, holy man! what a charlatan! Ha! you do not know me? Well, I knew you! I knew you immediately, as soon as you stuck your nose in here. Ah! you are going to find out at last that it is not all roses to go into people’s houses like that, under pretext of their being inns, with worn-out clothes, with the appearance of a pauper, to whom anybody would

have given a sou, to deceive persons, to act the generous, take their help away, and threaten them in the woods, and that you do not get quit of it by bringing back afterwards, when people are ruined, an overcoat that is too large and two paltry hospital coverlids, old beggar, child-stealer !”

He stopped, and appeared to be talking to himself for a moment. One would have said that his fury dropped like, the Rhone, into some hole ; then, as if he were finishing aloud something that he had been saying to himself, he struck his fist on the table and cried,—

“ With his honest look ! ”

And apostrophizing M. Leblanc,—

“ Zounds ! you made a mock of me once ! you are the cause of all my misfortunes ! For fifteen hundred francs you got a girl that I had, and who certainly belonged to rich people, and who had already brought me in a good deal of money, and from whom I ought to have got enough to live on all my life ! A girl who would have made up all that I lost in that abominable chophouse where they had such royal spree, and where I devoured my all like a fool ! Oh ! I wish that all the wine that was drunk in my house had been poison to those who drank it ! But no matter ! Say, now ! you must have thought me green when you went away with the Lark ? you had your club in the woods ! you were the strongest ! Revenge ! The trumps are in my hand to-day. You are skunked, my good man ! Oh ! but don't I laugh ! Indeed, I do ! Didn't he fall into the trap ? I told him that I was an actor, that my name was Fabantou, that I had played comedy with Mainselle Mars, with Mamselle Muche, that my landlord must be paid to-morrow, the 4th of February, and he did not even think that the 8th of January is quarter-day, and not the 4th of February ! The ridiculous fool ! And these four paltry philippes that he brings me ! Rascal ! He had not heart enough to go up to a hundred francs ! And how he

swallowed my platitudes ! The fellow amused me. I said to myself, ‘Blubber-lips ! go on, I have got you ; I lick your paws this morning, I will gnaw your heart to-night !’”

Thénardier stopped. He was out of breath. His little narrow chest was blowing like a blacksmith’s bellows. His eye was full of the base delight of a feeble, cruel, and cowardly animal, which can finally prostrate that of which it has stood in awe, and insult what it has flattered, the joy of a dwarf putting his heel upon the head of Goliath, the joy of a jackal beginning to tear a sick bull, dead enough not to be able to defend himself, alive enough yet to suffer.

M. Leblanc did not interrupt him, but said when he stopped,—

“I do not know what you mean. You are mistaken. I am a very poor man, and anything but a millionaire. I do not know you ; you mistake me for another.”

“Ha !” screamed Thénardier, “good mountebank ! You stick to that joke yet ! You are in the fog, my old boy ! Ah ! you do not remember ! You do not see who I am !”

“Pardon me, Monsieur,” answered M. Leblanc, with a tone of politeness which, at such a moment, had a peculiarly strange and powerful effect, “I see that you are a bandit.”

Who has not noticed it—hateful beings have their tender points ; monsters are easily annoyed ? At this word bandit, the Thénardiess sprang off the bed. Thénardier seized his chair as if he were going to crush it in his hands : “Don’t you stir,” cried he to his wife, and turning towards M. Leblanc,—

“Bandit ! Yes, I know that you call us so, you rich people ! Yes ! it is true I have failed ; I am in concealment ; I have no bread ; I have not a sou ; I am a bandit ! Here are three days that I have eaten nothing, I am a bandit ! Ah ! you warm your feet ; you have Sacoski

pumps, you have wadded overcoats like archbishops, you live on the first floor in houses with a porter, you eat truffles, you eat forty-franc bunches of asparagus in the month of January, and green peas, you stuff yourselves, and when you want to know if it is cold you look in the newspaper to see at what degree the thermometer of the inventor, Chevalier, stands. But we are our own thermometers ! We have no need to go to the quai at the corner of the Tour de l'Horloge, to see how many degrees below zero it is ; we feel the blood stiffen in our veins and the ice reach our hearts, and we say, "There is no God !" And you come into our caverns—yes, into our caverns—and call us bandits. But we will eat you ! but we will devour you, poor little things ! Monsieur Millionaire ! know this,—I have been a man established in business, I have been licensed, I have been an elector, I am a citizen, I am ' And you, perhaps, are not one ? "

Here Thénardier took a step towards the men who were before the door, and added with a shudder,—

"When I think that he dares to come and talk to me, as if I were a cobbler !"

Then, addressing M. Leblanc with a fresh burst of frenzy,—

"And know this, too, Monsieur Philanthropist ! I am no doubtful man. I am not a man whose name nobody knows, and who comes into houses to carry off children. I am an old French soldier ; I ought to be decorated. I was at Waterloo, I was, and in that battle I saved a general, named the Comte de Pontmercy. This picture which you see, and which was painted by David at Bruqueselles, do you know who it represents ? It represents me. David desired to immortalize that feat of arms. I have General Pontmercy on my back, and I am carrying him through the storm of grape. That is history. He has never done anything at all for me, this general ; he is no better than

other people. But, nevertheless, I saved his life at the risk of my own, and I have my pockets full of certificates. I am a soldier of Waterloo—name of a thousand names! And now, that I have had the goodness to tell you all this, let us make an end of it; I must have some money; I must have a good deal of money; I must have an immense deal of money, or I will exterminate you, by the thunder of God!”

Marius had regained some control over his distress, and was listening. The last possibility of doubt had now vanished. It was indeed the Thénardier of the will. Marius shuddered at that reproach of ingratitude flung at his father, and which he was on the point of justifying so fatally. His perplexities were redoubled. Moreover, there was in all these words of Thénardier, in his tone, in his gestures, in his look, which flashed out flames at every word, there was in this explosion of an evil nature exposing its entire self, in this mixture of braggadocio and abjectness, of pride and pettiness, of rage and folly, in this chaos of real grievances and false sentiments, in this shamelessness of a wicked man tasting the sweetness of violence, in this brazen nakedness of a deformed soul, in this conflagration of every suffering combined with every hatred, something which was as hideous as evil and as sharp and bitter as the truth.

The picture by a master, the painting by David, the purchase of which he had proposed to M. Leblanc, was, the reader has guessed, nothing more than the sign of his chop-house, painted, as will be remembered, by himself, the only relic which he had saved from his shipwreck at Montfermeil.

As he had ceased to intercept Marius's line of vision, Marius could now look at the thing, and in this daub he really made out a battle, a background of smoke, and one man carrying off another. It was the group of Thénardier

and Pontmercy ; the saviour sergeant, the colonel saved Marius was, as it were, intoxicated ; this picture in some sort restored his father to life ; it was not now the sign of the Montfermeil inn—it was a resurrection ; in it a tomb half opened, from it a phantom arose. Marius heard his heart ring in his temples, he had the cannon of Waterloo sounding in his ears ; his bleeding father dimly painted upon this dusky panel startled him, and it seemed to him that that shapeless shadow was gazing steadily upon him.

When Thénardier had taken breath, he fixed his blood-shot eyes upon Monsieur Leblanc, and said in a low and abrupt tone,—

“What have you to say before we begin the dance with you ?”

Monsieur Leblanc said nothing. In the midst of this silence a hoarse voice threw in this ghastly sarcasm from the hall,—

“If there is any wood to split, I am on hand !”

It was the man with the pole-axe who was making merry.

At the same time a huge face, bristly and dirty, appeared in the doorway, with a hideous laugh, which showed not teeth, but fangs.

It was the face of the man with the pole-axe.

“What have you taken off your mask for ?” cried Thénardier, furiously.

“To laugh,” replied the man.

For some moments Monsieur Leblanc had seemed to follow and to watch all the movements of Thénardier, who, blinded and bewildered by his own rage, was walking to and fro in the den with the confidence inspired by the feeling that the door was guarded, having armed possession of a disarmed man, and being nine to one, even if the Thénardiess should count for but one man. In his apostrophe to the man with the pole-axe he turned his back to Monsieur Leblanc.

Monsieur Leblanc seized this opportunity, pushed the chair away with his foot, the table with his hand, and at one bound, with a marvellous agility, before Thénardier had had time to turn round, he was at the window. To open it, get up and step through it, was the work of a second. He was half outside, when six strong hands seized him, and drew him forcibly back into the room. The three "chimney-doctors" had thrown themselves upon him. At the same time the Thénardiess had clutched him by the hair.

At the disturbance which this made the other bandits ran in from the hall. The old man, who was on the bed, and who seemed overwhelmed with wine, got off the pallet, and came tottering along with a road-mender's hammer in his hand.

One of the "chimney doctors," whose blackened face was lighted up by the candle, and in whom Marius, in spite of this colouring, recognized Panchaud, alias Printanier, alias Bigrenaille, raised a sort of loaded club made of a bar of iron, with a knob of lead at each end, over Monsieur Leblanc's head.

Marius could not endure this sight. "Father," thought he, "pardon me!" And his finger sought the trigger of the pistol. The shot was just about to be fired, when Thénardier's voice cried,—

"Do him no harm!"

This desperate attempt of the victim, far from exasperating Thénardier, had calmed him. There were two men in him, the ferocious man and the crafty man. Up to this moment, in the first flush of triumph, before his prey stricken down and motionless, the ferocious man had been predominant; when the victim resisted, and seemed to desire a struggle, the crafty man reappeared and resumed control.

"Do him no harm!" he repeated, and without suspecting it, the first result of this was to stop the pistol which was

just ready to go off, and paralyze Marius, to whom the urgency seemed to disappear, and who, in view of this new phase of affairs, saw no impropriety in waiting longer. Who knows but some chance may arise which will save him from the fearful alternative of letting the father of Ursula perish, or destroying the saviour of the Colonel!

A herculean struggle had commenced. With one blow full in the chest M. Leblanc had sent the old man sprawling into the middle of the room, then with two back strokes had knocked down two other assailants, whom he held one under each knee; the wretches screamed under the pressure as if they had been under a granite mill-stone; but the four others had seized the formidable old man by the arms and the back, and held him down over the two prostrate "chimney-doctors." Thus, master of the latter and mastered by the former, crushing those below him and suffocating under those above him, vainly endeavouring to shake off all the violence and blows which were heaped upon him, M. Leblanc disappeared under the horrible group of the bandits, like a wild boar under a howling pack of hounds and mastiffs.

They succeeded in throwing him over upon the bed nearest to the window, and held him there in awe. The Thénardiess had not let go of his hair.

"Here," said Thénardier, "let it alone. You will tear your shawl."

The Thénardiess obeyed, as the she-wolf obeys her mate, with a growl.

"Now, the rest of you," continued Thénardier, "search him."

M. Leblanc seemed to have given up all resistance. They searched him. There was nothing upon him but a leather purse which contained six francs, and his handkerchief.

Thénardier put the handkerchief in his pocket.

"What ! no pocket-book ?" he asked.

"Nor any watch," answered one of the "chimney-doctors."

"It is all the same," muttered, with the voice of a ventriloquist, the masked man who had the big key, "he is an old rough."

Thénardier went to the corner by the door and took a bundle of ropes which he threw to them.

"Tie him to the foot of the bed," said he, and perceiving the old fellow who lay motionless, when he was stretched across the room by the blow of M. Leblanc's fist,—

"Is Boulatruelle dead ?" asked he.

"No," answered Bigrenaille, "he is drunk."

"Sweep him into a corner," said Thénardier.

Two of the "chimney-doctors" pushed the drunkard up to the heap of old iron with their feet.

"Babet, what did you bring so many for ?" said Thénardier in a low tone to the man with the cudgel, "it was needless."

"What would you have ?" replied the man with the cudgel, "they all wanted to be in. The season is bad. There is nothing doing."

The pallet upon which M. Leblanc had been thrown was a sort of hospital bed supported by four big roughly squared wooden posts. M. Leblanc made no resistance. The brigands bound him firmly, standing with his feet to the floor, by the bed-post furthest from the window and nearest to the chimney.

When the last knot was tied, Thénardier took a chair and came and sat down nearly in front of M. Leblanc. Thénardier looked no longer like himself, in a few seconds the expression of his face had passed from unbridled violence to tranquil and crafty mildness. Marius hardly recognized in that polite, clerkly smile, the almost beastly mouth which was foaming a moment before ; he looked with astonish-

ment upon this fantastic and alarming metamorphosis, and he experienced what a man would feel who should see a tiger change itself into an attorney.

"Monsieur," said Thénardier.

And with a gesture dismissing the brigands who still had their hands upon M. Leblanc,—

"Move off a little, and let me talk with Monsieur."

They all retired towards the door. He resumed,—

"Monsieur, you were wrong in trying to jump out the window. You might have broken your leg. Now, if you please, we will talk quietly. In the first place, I must inform you of a circumstance I have noticed, which is that you have not yet made the least outcry."

Thénardier was right ; this incident was true, although it had escaped Marius in his anxiety. M. Leblanc had only uttered a few words without raising his voice, and, even in his struggle by the window with the six bandits, he had preserved the most profound and the most remarkable silence. Thénardier continued,—

"Indeed ! you might have cried thief a little, for I should not have found it inconvenient. Murder ! that is said upon occasion, and, as far as I am concerned, I should not have taken it in bad part. It is very natural that one should make a little noise when he finds himself with persons who do not inspire him with as much confidence as they might ; you might have done it, and we should not have disturbed you. We would not even have gagged you. And I will tell you why. It is because this room is very deaf. That is all I can say for it, but I can say that. It is a cave. We could fire a bomb here, and at the nearest guardhouse it would sound like a drunkard's snore. Here a cannon would go boom, and thunder would go puff. It is a convenient apartment. But, in short, you did not cry out, **that was better ; I make you my compliments for it, and I will tell you what I conclude from it : my dear Monsieur,**

when a man cries out, who is it that comes? The police. And after the police? Justice. Well! you did not cry out, because you were no more anxious than we to see justice and the police come. It is because—I suspected as much long ago—you have some interest in concealing something. For our part, we have the same interest. Now we can come to an understanding.”

While speaking thus, it seemed as though Thénardier, with his gaze fixed upon Monsieur Leblanc, was endeavouring to thrust the daggers which he looked, into the very conscience of his prisoner. His language, moreover, marked by a sort of subdued and sullen insolence, was reserved and almost select, and in this wretch, who was just before nothing but a brigand, one could now perceive “the man who studied to be a priest.”

The silence which the prisoner had preserved, this precaution which he had carried even to the extent of endangering his life, this resistance to the first impulse of nature, which is to utter a cry, all this, it must be said, since it had been remarked, was annoying to Marius, and painfully astonished him.

The observation of Thénardier, well founded as it was, added in Marius's eyes still more to the obscurity of the mysterious cloud that enveloped this strange and serious face to which Courfeyrac had given the nickname of Monsieur Leblanc. But whatever he might be, bound with ropes, surrounded by assassins, half buried, so to speak, in a grave which was deepening beneath him every moment, before the fury as well as before the mildness of Thénardier, this man remained impassible; and Marius could not repress at such a moment his admiration for that superbly melancholy face.

Here was evidently a soul inaccessible to fear, and ignorant of dismay. Here was one of those men who are superior to astonishment in desperate situations. However

extreme the crisis, however inevitable the catastrophe, there was nothing there of the agony of the drowning man, staring with horrified eyes as he sinks to the bottom.

Thénardier quietly got up, went to the fireplace, took away the screen, which he leaned against the nearest pallet, and thus revealed the furnace full of glowing coals, in which the prisoner could plainly see the chisel at a white heat, spotted here and there with little scarlet stars.

Then Thénardier came back and sat down by Monsieur Leblanc.

"I continue," said he. "Now we can come to an understanding. Let us arrange this amicably. I was wrong to fly into a passion just now. I do not know where my wits were, I went much too far, I talked extravagantly. For instance, because you are a millionaire, I told you that I wanted money, a good deal of money, an immense deal of money. That would not be reasonable. My God, rich as you may be, you have your expenses; who does not have them? I do not want to ruin you, I am not a catch-poll, after all. I am not one of those people who, because they have the advantage in position, use it to be ridiculous. Here, I am willing to go half way and make some sacrifice on my part. I need only two hundred thousand francs."

Monsieur Leblanc did not breathe a word. Thénardier went on,—

"You see that I water my wine pretty well. I do not know the state of your fortune, but I know that you do not care much for money, and a benevolent man like you can certainly give two hundred thousand francs to a father of a family who is unfortunate. Certainly you are reasonable also, you do not imagine that I would take the trouble I have to-day, and that I would organize the affair of this evening, which is a very fine piece of work, in the opinion of these gentlemen, to end off by asking you for enough to go and drink fifteen-sou red wine and eat veal at Des-

noyers'. Two hundred thousand francs, it is worth it. That trifle once out of your pocket, I assure you that all is said, and that you need not fear a snap of the finger. You will say, 'But I have not two hundred thousand francs with me.' Oh! I am not exacting. I do not require that. I only ask one thing. Have the goodness to write what I shall dictate."

Here Thénardier paused, then he added, emphasizing each word and casting a smile towards the furnace,—

"I give you notice that I shall not admit that you cannot write."

A grand inquisitor might have envied that smile.

Thénardier pushed the table close up to Monsieur Leblanc, and took the inkstand, a pen, and a sheet of paper from the drawer, which he left partly open, and from which gleamed the long blade of the knife.

He laid the sheet of paper before Monsieur Leblanc.

"Write," said he.

The prisoner spoke at last,—

"How do you expect me to write? I am tied."

"That is true, pardon me!" said Thénardier, "you are quite right."

And turning towards Bigrenaille,—

"Untie Monsieur's right arm."

Panchaud, alias Printanier, alias Bigrenaille, executed Thénardier's order. When the prisoner's right hand was free, Thénardier dipped the pen into the ink, and presented it to him.

"Remember, Monsieur, that you are in our power, at our discretion, that no human power can take you away from here, and that we should be really grieved to be obliged to proceed to unpleasant extremities. I know neither your name nor your address, but I give you notice that you will remain tied until the person whose duty it

will be to carry the letter which you are about to write, has returned. Have the kindness now to write."

"What?" asked the prisoner.

"I will dictate."

M. Leblanc took the pen.

"Thénardier began to dictate.

"My daughter——"

The prisoner shuddered and lifted his eyes to Thénardier.

"Put 'My dear daughter,'" said Thénardier. M. Leblanc obeyed. Thénardier continued,—

"Come immediately——"

He stopped.

"You call her daughter, do you not?"

"Who?" asked M. Leblanc.

"Zounds!" said Thénardier, "the little girl, the Lark."

M. Leblanc answered without the least apparent motion,—

"I do not know what you mean."

"Well, go on," said Thénardier, and he began to dictate again.

"Come immediately, I have imperative need of you. The person who will give you this note is directed to bring you to me. I am waiting for you. Come with confidence."

M. Leblanc had written the whole. Thénardier added,—

"Ah! strike out *come with confidence*; that might lead her to suppose that the thing is not quite clear, and that distrust is possible."

M. Leblanc erased the three words.

"Now," continued Thénardier, "sign it. What is your name?"

The prisoner laid down the pen and asked,—

"For whom is this letter?"

"You know very well," answered Thénardier; "for the little girl; I have just told you."

It was evident that Thénardier avoided naming the young girl in question. He said "the Lark," he said "the little girl," but he did not pronounce the name. The precaution of a shrewd man preserving his own secret before his accomplices. To speak the name would have been to give up the whole "affair" to them, and to tell them more than they needed to know.

He resumed,—

"Sign it. What is your name?"

"Urbain Fabre," said the prisoner.

Thénardier, with the movement of a cat, thrust his hand into his pocket and pulled out the handkerchief taken from M. Leblanc. He looked for the mark upon it and held it up to the candle.

"U. F. That is it. Urbain Fabre. Well, sign U. F."

The prisoner signed.

"As it takes two hands to fold the letter, give it to me, I will fold it."

This done, Thénardier resumed,—

"Put on the address, *Mademoiselle Fabre*, at your house. I know that you live not very far from here, in the neighbourhood of Saint Jacques du Haut Pas, since you go there to mass every day, but I do not know in what street. I see that you understand your situation. As you have not lied about your name, you will not lie about your address. Put it on yourself."

The prisoner remained thoughtful for a moment, then he took the pen and wrote,—

"Mademoiselle Fabre, at Monsieur Urbain Fabre's, Rue Saint Dominique d'Enfer, No. 17."

Thénardier seized the letter with a sort of feverish convulsive movement.

"Wife!" cried he.

The Thénardiess sprang forward.

"Here is the letter. You know what you have to do. There is a fiacre below. Go right away, and come back ditto."

And addressing the man with the pole-axe,—

"Here, since you have taken off your hide-your-nose, go with the woman. You will get up behind the fiacre. You know where you left the *maringotte*."

"Yes," said the man.

And, laying down his pole-axe in a corner, he followed the Thénardiess.

As they were going away, Thénardier put his head through the half-open door and screamed into the hall,—

"Above all things do not lose the letter! remember that you have two hundred thousand francs with you."

The harsh voice of the Thénardiess answered,—

"Rest assured, I have put it in my bosom."

A minute had not passed when the snapping of a whip was heard, which grew fainter and rapidly died away.

"Good!" muttered Thénardier. "They are going good speed. At that speed the bourgeoisie will be back in three-quarters of an hour."

He drew a chair near the fireplace and sat down, folding his arms and holding his muddy boots up to the furnace.

"My feet are cold," said he.

There were now but five bandits left in the den with Thénardier and the prisoner. These men, through the masks or the black varnish which covered their faces and made of them, as fear might suggest, charcoal-men, negroes, or demons, had a heavy and dismal appearance, and one felt that they would execute a crime as they would any drudgery, quietly, without anger and without mercy, with

a sort of irksomeness. They were heaped together in a corner like brutes, and were silent. Thénardier was warming his feet. The prisoner had relapsed into his taciturnity. A gloomy stillness had succeeded the savage tumult which filled the garret a few moments before.

The candle, in which a large thief had formed, hardly lighted up the enormous den, the fire had grown dull, and all their monstrous heads made huge shadows on the walls and on the ceiling.

No sound could be heard save the quiet breathing of the drunken old man, who was asleep.

Marius was waiting in an anxiety which everything increased. The riddle was more impenetrable than ever. Who was this "little girl," whom Thénardier had also called the Lark? was it his "Ursula?" The prisoner had not seemed to be moved by this word, the Lark, and answered in the most natural way in the world, "I do not know what you mean." On the other hand, the two letters U. F. were explained; it was Urbain Fabre, and Ursula's name was no longer Ursula. This Marius saw most clearly. A sort of hideous fascination held him spell-bound to the place from which he observed and commanded this whole scene. There he was, almost incapable of reflection and motion, as if annihilated by such horrible things in so close proximity. He was waiting, hoping, for some movement, no matter what, unable to collect his ideas, and not knowing what course to take.

"At all events," said he, "if the Lark is she, I shall certainly see her, for the Thénardiess is going to bring her here. Then all will be plain. I will give my blood and my life, if need be, but I will deliver her. Nothing shall stop me."

Nearly half an hour passed thus. Thénardier appeared absorbed in a dark meditation, the prisoner did not stir. Nevertheless Marius thought he had heard at intervals and

for some moments a little dull noise from the direction of the prisoner.

Suddenly Thénardier addressed the prisoner,—

“Monsieur Fabre, here, so much let me tell you at once.”

These few words seemed to promise a clearing up. Marius listened closely. Thénardier continued,—

“My spouse is coming back, do not be impatient. I think the Lark is really your daughter, and I find it quite natural that you should keep her. But listen a moment : with your letter, my wife is going to find her. I told my wife to dress up, as you saw, so that your young lady would follow her without hesitation. They will both get into the fiacre with my comrade behind. There is somewhere outside one of the barriers a *maringotte* with two very good horses harnessed. They will take your young lady there. She will get out of the carriage. My comrade will get into the *maringotte* with her, and my wife will come back here to tell us, ‘It is done.’ As for your young lady, no harm will be done her ; the *maringotte* will take her to a place where she will be quiet, and as soon as you have given me the little two hundred thousand francs, she will be sent back to you. If you have me arrested, my comrade will give the Lark a pinch, that is all.”

The prisoner did not utter a word. After a pause, Thénardier continued, —

“It is very simple, as you see. There will be no harm done unless you wish there should be. That is the whole story. I tell you in advance, so that you may know.”

He stopped ; the prisoner did not break the silence, and Thénardier resumed,—

“As soon as my spouse has got back and said, ‘The Lark is on her way,’ we will release you, and you will be free to go home to bed. You see that we have no bad intentions.”

Appalling images passed before Marius's mind. What! this young girl whom they were kidnapping, they were not going to bring her here? One of those monsters was going to carry her off into the gloom? where? And if it were she! And it was clear that it was she. Marius felt his heart cease to beat. What was he to do? Fire off the pistol? put all these wretches into the hands of justice? But the hideous man of the pole-axe would none the less be out of all reach with the young girl, and Marius remembered these words of Thénardier, the bloody signification of which he divined: "*If you have me arrested, my comrade will give the Lark a pinch.*"

Now it was not by the Colonel's will alone, it was by his love itself, by the peril of her whom he loved, that he felt himself held back.

This fearful situation, which had lasted now for more than an hour, changed its aspect at every moment. Marius had the strength to pass in review successively all the most heart-rending conjectures, seeking some hope and finding none. The tumult of his thoughts strangely contrasted with the deathly silence of the den.

In the midst of this silence they heard the sound of the door of the stairway, which opened, then closed.

The prisoner made a movement in his bonds.

"Here is the bourgeoisie," said Thénardier.

He had hardly said this, when in fact the Thénardiess burst into the room, red, breathless, panting, with glaring eyes, and cried, striking her big hands upon her hips both at the same time,—

"False address!"

The bandit whom she had taken with her came in behind her and picked up his pole-axe again.

"False address?" repeated Thénardier.

She continued,—

"Nobody! Rue Saint Dominique, number seventeen,

no Monsieur Urbain Fabre! They do not know who he is!"

She stopped for lack of breath, then continued,—

"Monsieur Thénardier! this old fellow has cheated you! you are too good, do you see! I would have cut up the *Margoulette* for you in quarters, to begin with! and if he had been ugly, I would have cooked him alive! Then he would have had to talk, and had to tell where the girl is, and had to tell where the rhino is! That is how I would have fixed it! No wonder that they say men are stupider than women! Nobody! number seventeen! it is a large porte-cochère! No Monsieur Fabre! Rue Saint Dominique, full gallop, and drink-money to the driver, and all! I spoke to the porter and the portress, who is a fine stout woman, they did not know the fellow."

Marius breathed. She, Ursula or the Lark, she whom he no longer knew what to call, was safe.

While his exasperated wife was vociferating, Thénardier had seated himself on the table; he sat a few seconds without saying a word, swinging his right leg, which was hanging down, and gazing upon the furnace with a look of savage reverie.

At last he said to the prisoner with a slow and singularly ferocious inflection,—

"A false address! what did you hope for by that?"

"To gain time!" cried the prisoner, with a ringing voice.

And at the same moment he shook off his bonds; they were cut. The prisoner was no longer fastened to the bed save by one leg.

Before the seven men had had time to recover themselves and to spring upon him, he had bent over the fireplace, reached his hand towards the furnace, then rose up, and now Thénardier, the Thénardiess, and the bandits, thrown by the shock into the back part of the room, beheld him with stupefaction, holding above his head the

glowing chisel, from which fell an ominous light, almost free and in a formidable attitude.

At the judicial inquest, to which the ambuscade in the Gorbeau tenement gave rise in the sequel, it appeared that a big sou, cut and worked in a peculiar fashion, was found in the garret, when the police made a descent upon it; this big sou was one of those marvels of labour which the patience of the galleys produces in the darkness and for the darkness—marvels which are nothing else but instruments of escape. These hideous and delicate products of a wonderful art are to jewellery what the metaphors of argot are to poetry. There are Benvenuto Cellinis in the galleys, even as there are Villons in language. The unhappy man who aspires to deliverance finds the means, sometimes without tools, with a folding-knife, with an old case-knife, to split a sou into two thin plates, to hollow out these two plates without touching the stamp of the mint, and to cut a screw-thread upon the edge of the sou, so as to make the plates adhere anew. This screws and unscrews at will; it is a box. In this box, they conceal a watch-spring, and this watch-spring, well handled, cuts off rings of some size and bars of iron. The unfortunate convict is supposed to possess only a sou; no, he possesses liberty. A big sou of this kind, on subsequent examination by the police, was found open and in two pieces in the room under the pallet near the window. There was also discovered a little saw of blue steel which could be concealed in the big sou. It is probable that when the bandits were searching the prisoner's pockets, he had this big sou upon him and succeeded in hiding it in his hand; and that afterwards, having his right hand free, he unscrewed it and used the saw to cut the ropes by which he was fastened, which would explain the slight noise and the imperceptible movements which Marius had noticed.

Being unable to stoop down for fear of betraying himself, he had not cut the cords on his left leg.

The bandits had recovered their first surprise.

"Be easy," said Bigrenaille to Thénardier. "He holds yet by one leg, and he will not go off, I answer for it. I tied that shank for him."

The prisoner now raised his voice,—

"You are pitiable, but my life is not worth the trouble of so long a defence. As to your imagining that you could make me speak, that you could make me write what I do not wish to write, that you could make me say what I do not wish to say——"

He pulled up the sleeve of his left arm, and added,—

"Here !"

At the same time he extended his arm, and laid upon the naked flesh the glowing chisel, which he held in his right hand by the wooden handle.

They heard the hissing of the burning flesh ; the odour peculiar to chambers of torture spread through the den. Marius staggered, lost in horror ; the brigands themselves felt a shudder ; the face of the wonderful old man hardly contracted, and while the red iron was sinking into the smoking, impassible, and almost august wound, he turned upon Thénardier his fine face, in which there was no hatred, and in which suffering was swallowed up in a serene majesty.

With great and lofty natures, the revolt of the flesh and the senses against the assaults of physical pain brings out the soul, and makes it appear on the countenance, in the same way as mutinies of the soldiery force the captain to show himself.

"Wretches!" said he, "have no more fear for me than I have of you."

And drawing the chisel out of the wound, he threw it

through the window, which was still open; the horrible glowing tool disappeared, whirling into the night, and fell in the distance, and was quenched in the snow.

The prisoner resumed,—

“Do with me what you will.”

He was disarmed.

“Lay hold of him!” said Thénardier.

Two of the brigands laid their hands upon his shoulders, and the masked man with the ventriloquist’s voice placed himself in front of him, ready to knock out his brains with a blow of the key, at the least motion.

At the same time Marius heard beneath him, at the foot of the partition, but so near that he could not see those who were talking, this colloquy, exchanged in a low voice,—

“There is only one thing more to do.”

“To kill him!”

“That is it.”

It was the husband and wife who were holding counsel.

Thénardier walked with slow steps towards the table, opened the drawer, and took out a knife.

Marius was tormenting the trigger of his pistol. Unparalleled perplexity! For an hour there had been two voices in his conscience, one telling him to respect the will of his father, the other crying to him to succour the prisoner. These two voices, without interruption, continued their struggle, which threw him into agony. He had vaguely hoped up to that moment to find some means of reconciling these two duties, but no possible way had arisen. The peril was now urgent—the last limit of hope was passed; at a few steps from the prisoner, Thénardier was reflecting, with the knife in his hand.

Marius cast his eyes wildly about him—the last mechanical resource of despair.

Suddenly he started.

At his feet, on the table, a clear ray of the full moon

illuminated, and seemed to point out to him, a sheet of paper. Upon that sheet he read this line, written in large letters that very morning, by the elder of the Thénardier girls,—

“THE SLOPS ARE HERE.”

An idea—a flash crossed Marius's mind; that was the means which he sought; the solution of this dreadful problem which was torturing him—to spare the assassin and to save the victim. He knelt down upon his bureau, reached out his arm, caught up the sheet of paper, quietly detached a bit of plaster from the partition, wrapped it in the paper, and threw the whole through the crevice into the middle of the den.

It was time. Thénardier had conquered his last fears, or his last scruples, and was moving towards the prisoner.

“Something fell!” cried the Thénardiess.

“What is it?” said the husband.

The woman had sprung forward, and picked up the piece of plaster wrapped in the paper. She handed it to her husband.

“How did this come in?” asked Thénardier.

“Egad!” said the woman, “how do you suppose it got in? It came through the window.”

“I saw it pass,” said Bigrenaille.

Thénardier hurriedly unfolded the paper, and held it up to the candle.

“It is Eponine's writing. The devil!”

He made a sign to his wife, who approached quickly, and he showed her the line written on the sheet of paper; then he added in a hollow voice,—

“Quick! the ladder! leave the meat in the trap, and clear the camp!”

“Without cutting the man's throat?” asked the Thénardiess.

“We have not the time.”

"Which way?" inquired Bigrenaille.

"Through the window," answered Thénardier. "As Ponine threw the stone through the window, that shows that the house is not watched on that side."

The mask with the ventriloquist's voice laid down his big key, lifted both arms into the air, and opened and shut his hands rapidly three times, without saying a word. This was like the signal to clear the decks in a fleet. The brigands, who were holding the prisoner, let go of him; in the twinkling of an eye, the rope-ladder was unrolled out of the window, and firmly fixed to the casing by the two iron hooks.

The prisoner paid no attention to what was passing about him. He seemed to be dreaming or praying.

As soon as the ladder was fixed, Thénardier cried,—

"Come, bourgeoisie!"

And he rushed towards the window.

But as he was stepping out, Bigrenaille seized him roughly by the collar.

"No; say now, old joker! after us."

"After us!" howled the bandits.

"You are children," said Thénardier. "We are losing time. The *railles* are at our heels."

"Well," said one of the bandits, "let us draw lots who shall go out first."

Thénardier exclaimed,—

"Are you fools? are you cracked? You are a mess of *jobards*! Losing time, isn't it? drawing lots, isn't it? with a wet finger! for the short straw! write our names! put them in a cap!——"

"Would you like my hat?" cried a voice from the door.

They all turned round. It was Javert.

He had his hat in his hand, and was holding it out smiling.

XXI.

JAVERT, at nightfall, had posted his men and hid himself behind the trees on the Rue de la Barrière des Gobelins, which fronts the Gorbeau tenement on the other side of the boulevard. He commenced by "opening his pocket," to put into it the two young girls, who were charged with watching the approaches to the den. But he only "bagged" Azelma. As for Eponine, she was not at her post; she had disappeared, and he could not take her. Then Javert put himself in rest, and listened for the signal agreed upon. The going and coming of the fiacre fretted him greatly. At last he became impatient, and *sure that there was a nest there*, sure of being "*in good luck*," having recognized several of the bandits who had gone in, he finally decided to go up without waiting for the pistol-shot.

It will be remembered that he had Marius's pass-key.

He had come at the right time.

The frightened bandits rushed for the arms which they had thrown down anywhere when they had attempted to escape. In less than a second these seven men, terrible to look upon, were grouped in a posture of defence; one with his pole-axe, another with his key, a third with his club, the others with the shears, the pincers, and the hammers, Thénardier grasping his knife. The Thénardiess seized a huge paving-stone which was in the corner of the window, and which served her daughters for a cricket.

Javert put on his hat again, and stepped into the room, his arms folded, his cane under his arm, his sword in its sheath.

"Halt there," said he. "You will not pass out through the window, you will pass out through the door. It is less unwholesome. There are seven of you, fifteen of us. Don't collar us like Auvergnats. Be genteel."

Bigrenaille took a pistol which he had concealed under his blouse, and put it into Thénardier's hand, whispering in his ear,—

"It is Javert. I dare not fire at that man. Dare you?"

"*Parbleu !*" answered Thénardier.

"Well, fire."

Thénardier took the pistol, and aimed at Javert.

Javert, who was within three paces, looked at him steadily, and contented himself with saying,—

"Don't fire, now ! It will flash in the pan."

Thénardier pulled the trigger. The pistol flashed in the pan.

"I told you so," said Javert.

Bigrenaille threw his tomahawk at Javert's feet.

"You are the emperor of the devils ! I surrender."

"And you?" asked Javert of the other bandits.

They answered,—

"We, too."

Javert replied calmly,—

"That is it, that is well ; I said so, you are genteel."

"I only ask one thing," said Bigrenaille, "that is, that I shan't be refused tobacco while I am in solitary."

"Granted," said Javert.

And turning round and calling behind him,—

"Come in now !"

A squad of sergeants *de vile* with drawn swords, and officers armed with axes and clubs, rushed in at Javert's call. They bound the bandits. This crowd of men, dimly lighted by a candle, filled the den with shadow.

"Handcuffs on all !" cried Javert.

"Come on, then !" cried a voice which was not a man's voice, but of which nobody could have said, "It is the voice of a woman."

The Thénardiess had intrenched herself in one of the corners of the window, and it was she who had just uttered this roar.

The sergents de ville and officers fell back.

She had thrown off her shawl, but kept on her hat ; her husband, crouched down behind her, was almost hidden beneath the fallen shawl, and she covered him with her body, holding the paving-stone with both hands above her head with the poise of a giantess who is going to hurl a rock.

"Take care !" she cried.

They all crowded back towards the hall. A wide space was left in the middle of the garret.

The Thénardiess cast a glance at the bandits who had allowed themselves to be tied, and muttered in a harsh and guttural tone,—

"The cowards !"

Javert smiled, and advanced in the open space which the Thénardiess was watching with all her eyes.

"Don't come near ! get out," cried she, "or I will crush you !"

"What a grenadier !" said Javert ; "mother, you have a beard like a man, but I have claws like a woman."

And he continued to advance.

The Thénardiess, her hair flying wildly and terrible, braced her legs, bent backwards, and threw the paving-stone wildly at Javert's head. Javert stooped, the stone passed over him, hit the wall behind, from which it knocked down a large piece of the plastering, and returned, bounding from corner to corner across the room, luckily almost empty, finally stopping at Javert's heels.

At that moment Javert reached the Thénardier couple.

One of his huge hands fell upon the shoulder of the woman, and the other upon her husband's head.

"The handcuffs !" cried he.

The police officers returned in a body, and in a few seconds Javert's order was executed.

The Thénardiess, completely crushed, looked at her manacled hands and those of her husband, dropped to the floor and exclaimed, with tears in her eyes,—

"My daughters !"

"They are provided for," said Javert.

Meanwhile the officers had found the drunken fellow who was asleep behind the door, and shook him. He awoke stammering,—

"Is it over, Jondrette ?"

"Yes," answered Javert.

The six manacled bandits were standing ; however, they still retained their spectral appearance—three blackened, three masked.

"Keep on your masks," said Javert.

And, passing them in review with the eye of a Frederic II. at parade at Potsdam, he said to the three "chimney doctors,"—

"Good day, Bigrenaille. Good day, Brujon. Good day, Deux-Milliards."

Then, turning towards the three masks, he said to the man of the pole-axe,—

"Good day, Gueulemer."

"And to the man of the cudgel,—

"Good day, Babet."

"And to the ventriloquist,—

"Your health, Claquesous."

Just then he perceived the prisoner of the bandits, who since the entrance of the police had not uttered a word, and had held his head down.

"Untie Monsieur !" said Javert, "and let nobody go out."

This said, he sat down with authority before the table, on which the candle and the writing materials still were, drew a stamped sheet from his pocket, and commenced his procès-verbal.

When he had written the first lines, a part of the formula, which is always the same, he raised his eyes

"Bring forward the gentleman whom these gentlemen had bound."

The officers looked about them.

"Well," asked Javert, "where is he now?"

The prisoner of the bandits, M. Leblanc, M. Urbain Fabre, the father of Ursula, or the Lark, had disappeared.

The door was guarded, but the window was not. As soon as he saw that he was unbound, and while Javert was writing, he had taken advantage of the disturbance, the tumult, the confusion, the obscurity, and a moment when their attention was not fixed upon him, to leap out of the window.

An officer ran to the window, and looked out; nobody could be seen outside.

The rope-ladder was still trembling.

"The devil !" said Javert, between his teeth, "that must have been the best one."

XXII.

THE day following that in which these events took place in the house on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, a child, who seemed to come from somewhere near the bridge of Austerlitz, went up by the cross alley on the right in the direction

of the Barrière de Fontainebleau. Night had closed in. This child was pale, thin, dressed in rags, with canvas trousers in the month of February, and was singing with all his might.

At the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier, an old crone was fumbling in a manure-heap by the light of a street lamp; the child knocked against her as he passed, then drew back, exclaiming,—

“Why, I took that for an enormous, enormous dog!”

He pronounced the word enormous the second time with a pompous and sneering voice which capitals would express very well: an enormous, ENORMOUS dog!

The old woman rose up furious.

“Jail-bird!” muttered she. “If I had not been stooping over, I know where I would have planted my foot!”

The child was now at a little distance.

“K’sss! k’sss!” said he. “After all, perhaps I was not mistaken.”

The old woman, choking with indignation, sprang up immediately, the red glare of the lantern fully illuminating her livid face, all hollowed out with angles and wrinkles, with crows’ feet at the corners of her mouth. Her body was lost in the shadow, and only her head could be seen. One would have said it was the mask of Decrepitude shrivelled by a flash in the night. The child looked at her.

“Madame,” said he, “has not the style of beauty that suits me.”

He went on his way and began to sing again.

At the end of three lines he stopped. He had reached No. 50-52, and finding the door locked, had begun to batter it with kicks, heroic and re-echoing kicks that revealed rather the men’s shoes which he wore than the child’s feet which he had.

Meantime, this same old woman whom he had met with

at the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier was running after him with much clamour and many crazy gestures. "What's the matter? what's the matter? Good God! they are staving the door down! They are breaking into the house!"

The kicks continued.

The old woman exhausted her lungs.

"Is that the way they use houses now-a-days?"

Suddenly she stopped. She had recognized the *gamin*.

"What! it is that Satan!"

"Hallo! it is the old woman," said the child. "Good day, Bougonmuche. I have come to see my ancestors."

The old woman responded, with a composite grimace, an admirable extemporization of hatred making the most of decay and ugliness, which was unfortunately lost in the obscurity,—

"There is nobody there, nosey."

"Pshaw!" said the child, "where is my father, then?"

"At La Force."

"Heigho! and my mother?"

"At Saint Lazare."

"Well! and my sisters?"

"At Les Madelonnettes."

The child scratched the back of his ear, looked at Ma'am Bougon and said,—

"Ah!"

Then he turned on his heel, and a moment afterwards the old woman, who stopped on the door-step, heard him sing with his clear, fresh voice, as he disappeared under the black elms shivering in the wintry winds.

CRITICISMS.

"This work has something more than the beauties of an exquisite style or the word-compelling power of a literary Zeus to recommend it to the tender care of a distant posterity: in dealing with all the emotions, passions, doubts, fears, which go to make up our common humanity, M. Victor Hugo has stamped upon every page the Hall-mark of genius and the loving patience and conscientious labour of a true artist. *But the merits of 'Les Misérables' do not merely consist in the conception of it as a whole; it abounds, page after page, with details of unequalled beauty.*"—*Quarterly Review*.

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